MARGARET GRAHAM:

A TALE.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following short tale needs very little prefatory matter, as both the general construction and the details are exceedingly simple. It may be as well, however to inform the reader that it can hardly be called a fiction; for though two histories—that of Allan Fairfax, and that of Margaret Graham—have been blended into one, each is more than founded upon fact. I should not probably be justified in giving the names of the persons from whom I received them without permission, which I have not time to obtain; but both the gentleman, Captain F——, who related to me the story of my hero, and Mrs. S—— ——, to whom I am indebted for that of my heroine, are persons of undoubted veracity, and vouched for the truth of the narrative.

THE AUTHOR.

PART THE FIRST.



THE DAYS OF PROSPERITY.

MARGARET GRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

THE LABOURER'S RETURN.

The much-abused climate of England has its advantages both in point of the picturesque and the agreeable. Not only have we an infinite variety, which in itself is one of the great sources of pleasure, but we have beauties which no other land possesses. I have stood under the deep blue sky of Italy, longing more for a cloud than ever I did for sunshine, when, day after day, and week after week, and month after month, went by, without a film of vapour as big as a man's hand coming to relieve the monotony, or cast a flitting shadow on the earth. I have stood beneath the burning suns of Spain, and longed for a refreshing shower, or even a softening mist, while through the whole of a long summer not a drop has fallen to moisten the stones in the dry water-courses, or wet the crisp leaves of the cork tree. The cloud and the shower have all the time been giving beautiful variety to the English summer, and our own fair land has been alternately in shadow and in light, glittering with drops or sparkling in the beams

There may be a blaze of glory and a fiery power

in southern countries which our island never knows; but where is the silvery light which so often at morning or at evening steals through the prospect, casting its gentle gleam upon the waters, the woods, and fields, like the blessed influence of a calm and gentle spirit upon all that it approaches?

One of the peculiar advantages of more northern lands is the long twilight which follows the close of day. There is certainly something grand and fine, in hotter climates, in the sudden plunge of the sun beneath the horizon, and the instantaneous darkness that succeeds, but it little compensates for the calm half hour of waning light, when the star of day seems to withdraw his beams as with regret, and to leave a blessing when he bids good night.

The sun had just sunk—indeed, I cannot be sure that he was absolutely below the horizon, for there were lines of black-blue cloud drawn across the verge of the sky, and the lines were edged with gold. Above was a wide sheet of heavy cloud, low down and flat, like a ceiling of black marble, beneath, and confined by which, the whole rays poured on in horizontal lines, catching the edges of mountain and fell, and wood and moor, and casting long shadows from a solitary fir-tree and the finger-post with its long bare arms. That finger-post pointed, in one direction, to a small town in Cumberland, which I shall call Brownswick, and in the other, to a village, which probably would not have had the honour of being pointed out at all, had not several gentlemen of the fore-mentioned town thought fit to build themselves country-houses in its neighbourhood. The attraction was a little lake, much less in dimensions indeed than Windermere, but hardly less beautiful in the scenery which surrounded it. No indication of

such scenery being in the vicinity was afforded from the spot where the finger-post was placed. It was a dull wide moor, covered with withered heath, and here and there patches of broom and gorse. On one hand you saw down a wide broken slope, presenting nothing but irregular undulations for several miles, except a pit or a little pond, till, in the extreme distance blue lines of wood and field were seen, not at all unlike those of the sky on which they rested, only broken by the spire of a church, and what seemed an old solitary tower. On the other hand the moor continued to rise, showing a high bank, which cut off the view of everything beyond. It was a desolate scene, and chill; heavy and hard, but not without its sublimity—from the extent, and the solitude, and the depth of the tones. Let the reader remark it, for we may have to do with it hereafter. At present, it is only necessary to say, that just when the sun was setting, if not quite set, as I have said, two labouring men walked along the road, under the finger-post, taking a direction from the town, and towards the village. It must be remembered that these two points were some nines miles apart, and that the finger-post stood about half-way.

Clothed in the common dress of the country, with smock-frocks upon their shoulders, and coarse leathern gaiters upon their legs, the aspect of the two labourers showed nothing more than that they were both stout fellows of about the middle age. One might be forty, the other forty-two or three. They were both tall, as most Cumberland men are, but one had an inch or so the advantage of the other. Their pace was slow, as if they were somewhat weary, and their gait was heavy and awkward, such as is gained by walking over ploughed fields at the

tail of a plough or harrow; yet they were neither of them stupid, nor altogether ignorant men.

It has long been a common mistake, and even since the mistake must have been clearly perceived and corrected in the minds of most men it has become a common party falsehood, to draw comparisons disadvantageous to the agricultural classes, between them and the manufacturing class. Those whom it is intended to oppress, it is generally found necessary to calumniate, and the most popular means of promulgating a dangerous error is to ridicule all those who oppose it. Such has been the case with the agricultural labourer and small farmer. In point of plain common sense, and natural strength of intellect, they are generally very far superior to parallel classes in the manufacturing districts. It is true they are practical more than theoretical in all their proceedings; that they are less quick, less ready, perhaps both in mind and body, than the artisan or shopkeeper of a town, but, at the same time, their notions are sounder, firmer, more precise, as their bodies are more vigorous, healthy, and enduring; and no class of men have I ever met with more capable of arriving at a just opinion upon a plain proposition than those classes which have been called stupid, ignorant, and prejudiced. Learning, perhaps, they do not possess. Scattered thinly over a wide tract of country, instead of gathered into the close communion of towns, they have few opportunities of expressing their sentiments as a body, or of uniting for one common object; but in those cottages (and there are many of them) where such excellent cheap publications as those of Chambers and Knight have penetrated, I have heard reasonings on the subjects submitted, which, though the language might be

rude, would not have disgraced, in point of intellect, any society in the world. I am convinced, that if plain common sense be, as I believe it, the most excellent quality of the mind, that quality is to be found more frequently than anywhere else in the yeoman and peasant class of England.

As the two yeomen plodded on towards the home of rest, they were evidently busy with some subject that interested them deeply. More than once they stopped, turned round towards each other, and spoke earnestly, with more gesticulation, at least on one part, than is common among the phlegmatic nations of the north.

Let us listen awhile to their conversation, for it may have its interest.

"'Fore half of them are paid for," said the shortest of the two men, "they will have to pull them down, and then all the money is wasted."

"Money enough to feed half of the poor of the country, if it were well managed," said the other, jogging on by his companion's side; "but it is all a job, Ben. They wanted to put out the old rogues and put in new ones, and so they made places for them. The gentlemen pretended, when they got up this new law, that the poor's-rates were eating up all the property of the country. That was a lie, Ben, in the first place; but even if it were true, I wonder whose fault that was if not the magistrates' who suffered it?"

"Part theirs, part other folks," answered the man called Ben; "but it was a queer way to begin their saving to pull down, or sell for old song, or leave to rot by themselves, all the old houses, and build new ones upon the plan of costing as much as possible. Why, I calculate that our own Union house will cost

as much as a quarter of the poor's-rates of all the parishes in the Union for twenty years to come. They must pinch very close to save that, and something more into the bargain."

"I don't understand what you mean, Ben," said the other man, "about its being only part the magistrates' fault; I think it was their fault altogether. Why, when I lived over at Brownswick I saw how the overseers and fellows used to go on. They had eleven parish dinners, as they call them, at the Sun, in the year, and each man of them was allowed half-a-guinea for his dinner, and there were all kinds of other perquisites. Besides that, they were for ever making jobs for each other. There was Mr. Weston, the hatter, found out that the court-yard wanted paving, though it had only been paved twelve months before, and Mr. Greensides, another of the board, had the paving of it; but then as a match for that, Mr. Greensides found out that it would be much better for all the parish boys to have hats instead of caps, and Mr. Weston had the supplying of them. It was so well known a thing that all the contracts for the workhouse went amongst themselves, that no one, unless he was one of the board, ever offered at all; so they got just what price they liked. Now what were the magistrates and gentlemen about not to stop such things? It was a very good law, Ben, if it had been rightly worked, but those who were put to look after it either cheated themselves or let others cheat, and then cried out that the rates were eating up all the rents I tell you what, Ben, I have often thought that old poor-law was a very safe thing in times of famine or want of work. Men won't stand and see their children starve. If people don't give them food they will take it, and

once they begin taking, will take something more. I recollect hearing a lecturer man say, that the first duty of the soil was the support of every one upon it, and then I thought it was a very lucky thing that there was a law for making it do that duty in a regular sort of way, rather than let those who wanted support take it where they could find it."

"They would tell you the same is the case now," answered Ben, "though it is not, Jacob; for it is a very different case when a man who could get a little work, and was willing to do as much as he could get, went to the parish for a few shillings to eke it out. He could then always go out and look out for more to do. He had something to hold fast by; but now if he can get only five shillings a week, and his family cannot be kept upon less than ten, he must either see some of them starve, or give up his cottage, sell his goods, put himself out of the way of all work, and go as a pauper to the Union, where he is separated from his wife and children, and fed and treated worse than one of the prisoners in the gaol. Then when he comes out, he comes out as a pauper, and finds it ten times more difficult to get work than before, let his character be ever so good. A thousand to one he is a ruined man for ever, and has no spirit left but to hate those who have been ill-treating him. Many a man who has no religion thinks he may just as well pilfer a bit, and take his chance of getting into gaol, where he is sure to be better treated than in the Union; and all that might be saved by giving a few shillings a week where it is really wanted. Besides, you see, Jacob, it was a great check upon masters—the only check, indeed, we had. One farmer did not like another giving too little [illegible] his men were sure to

get the rest from the parish, and then the rates rose —but that brings me to what you asked; I say it was partly our own fault, Ben, that all these things have been changed in such a way—not mine, because I never had a sixpence of the parish in my life—but every blackguard used to go and cheat the magistrates through thick and thin. I recollect Jemmy Anderson, when he was getting sixteen or seventeen shillings a week as a carter's shoemaker, going out and getting ten shillings from one parish, and eight from another every week of his life."

"From two parishes?" cried Jacob.

"Ay, he managed it," answered his companion, "by a little hard swearing, and there was many a one like him. Our officers found him out, and refused to give him any more, but the impudent varment went up before the magistrates and took his oath, and the magistrate made an order upon the parish. So he had it all his own way."

"And was not that the magistrate's fault, Ben?" asked his friend; "the law did not force them to do anything of the kind unless they liked it."

"I don't know," answered the other, "I never saw the law, Jacob; but I do believe that very good laws are turned into very bad ones by the way that magistrates and other people go on, one changing a little of the meaning and another changing a little, till it is not the same thing at all. But one thing is certain, that there were many folks amongst ourselves who were in the wrong, though the magistrates were in the wrong too. Still there was no need of doing away a good law because foolish people had not used it right, and bad people had abused it; or, if they did change it, they might have made it better, not worse; less heavy upon the rich, but not throw all

the weight upon the poor. They'll have to change it again, depend upon it, or else not act up to it, which is worse; for the people won't bear it much longer."

"They'll not change it, unless they are driven," answered Jacob; "one of their objects is to lower wages, Ben, all over England, whether here or in the factories, and the new law is their greatest help; for, don't you see, we have no chance. We must take just what they will give, or starve, or rob, or go to worse than a prison."

"I'd rather starve in my own cottage than go to a Union," said Ben, "if it were not for the children. I could not bear to hear them cry for bread. However, I do not know that it is one of their objects to bring our labour down, though they've certainly taken a good way to do so, Jacob; and it is such laws as these that make poor men wish they had some hand in making the laws; for they find none made by others for their good. Some of the gentlemen wish to do it, I do believe, but they do not know how; and the end is, they put the sheep into the paws of the wolf, and tell the wolf to take good care of them; and then they call that political economy. It is the same in factory places. The master can do just what he likes, and the workman has no hold upon him. Work as hard as he will, he is cheated one way or another of half his earnings; if he grumbles, he is turned out to starve; if he goes to the poor-house, he is worse than a galley-slave, as they call it, and if he goes to a new factory to seek other work, he will not get it if he has been turned off for grumbling at the last; for the masters are allowed to combine, as people say, against their workmen, though not the workmen against the masters. I heard it all from poor Will Simpson, when he came back, after having

worked himself into a decline, to die amongst his own people."

"It is very hard!" said Jacob, "but these parliament men never will reckon all the power that money gives to a man; and they do not consider either what a greed a man who is making a great deal has to make more, though he drains men's blood to do it. If they did but think of these two points, they would never put the labourer entirely at the mercy of his employer, or have the employer and employer's friends and cronies to take care of the laws that are made for the good of the labourer. We take these things quietly, Ben, because our master is one out of a hundred; but I can tell you, that all the farmers about are already lowering their wages, and I heard Old Stumps grumbling at Mr. Graham for not lowering his."

"Master won't do that, unless corn comes down a good deal," said the other; "he knows what the value of a man's work is, and does not think how low he can get him to labour, but how much he can afford to give. I think Jacob, however, we had better be jogging on a little faster, for we shall get in wet."

"The blink of light is shutting up very fast," answered the other man, "and the wind is coming sobbing over the moor like a naughty child: signs of rain, sure enough; and there will be a gale too: don't you see how the dust is swirling round and round?"

As he spoke, they somewhat quickened their pace, and walked on for a mile without quitting the road that crossed the moor. By the time that mile was passed over, however, the clear space at the edge of the sky was covered with black cloud, and though the arch of the vapory canopy above was still tinged

with a faint shade of purple, all looked lurid and heavy, and twilight was waning fast.

At length, upon the edge of the moor—and, indeed, stolen from it about fifty years before—was a track of woodland, through which the rushing wind was heard rising higher and higher every moment, while a few large drops of rain fell pattering amongst the crisp yellow leaves that strewed the ground beneath.

"Hark!" cried the man named Ben, as they were following the path into the wood; "there is some one hallooing down below there."

"It is that devil's imp, Tommy Hicks," said the other; "I know his shout well enough. He is worse than a will-o'-the-wisp of nights, and I'll break his bones for him some day."

"Nonsense, Jacob—nonsense!" said the other; "he is but an idiot, man, and you would not go to hit a thing that's got no sense."

"He has sense enough to do a deal of mischief," answered Jacob; "and he never loses time when any is to be done. A licking would do him a vast deal of good. Why, he nearly strangled Mrs. Gibbs's boy t'other day, because he would not let him take away his mother's turnips."

"He is a spiteful chap," answered Ben; "and I don't let him come near our place for fear of his doing mischief to some of the children; but I don't hit him, for all that. I wonder what he is hooting and hallooing at that way."

"Just because he sees us walking along, and wishes to lead us into a pond or a moss," said the other; "but the rain is coming fast, and we shan't get home very dry, do what we will."

Concluding that it was as his companion said, and

that tho shout proceeded from an idiot well known in the country, the other man pursued the path through the wood, merely saying—

"I wonder they don't shut up Tommy Hicks in one of their Unions, or such sort of places; there is many a man a great deal wiser than he is put into a madhouse for life."

The belt of wood was soon passed, and about a quarter of a mile more of moor succeeded, and then some patches of cultivated ground, amidst which were scattered eight or nine cottages of a very superior description to those usually met with in that part of the country. They were, in fact, all the property of one proprietor, a liberal and kind-hearted man, who took the repairs upon himself, and saw that they were always done in time and to perfection. No broken thatch, no unstopped wall, no door half off the hinges was there; but with a great deal for comfort, and a little for taste, each labourer of Mr. Graham possessed a home, certainly not superior to that which every industrious man through the land ought to be able to command, but very much superior to the hovels in which the peasantry of England are often to be found. Neither were they huddled close together; each house possessed its own little garden and bit of potato ground, and was, moreover, separated from its neighbour, in most cases, by a small field or two inclosed by hedgerows—rather rare in that part of the country. Connecting them all together, however, were several paths, well covered with gray sand, and one principal road, though it seemed to be a private one, adorned from place to place by finger-posts directing the traveller towards Allerdale House. Where this road crossed the highway from the town, the two labourers separated, the one turning to the right, the

other to the left, each in search of his own cottage. It was by this time as dark as pitch, with the rain falling in heavy but scattered drops, and the wind dashing it against every opposing object: a sort of night when the sight of a man's own door is very pleasant to him. It was so to Ben Halliday, and he laid his hand upon the latch with the certainty of comfort and repayment for all the day's labour in the smiles of a happy home.

We must take once glance at the interior of his dwelling before we leave him, as we may hereafter have to return to it when a few short months have passed. As soon as he opened the door, a cheerful blaze presented itself from a large grate, well filled with fire, for it was a country where coal was cheap, and the inferior kinds might be had almost for taking. A good-sized pot hung above, heaving and sputtering with the broth for the evening meal, and Ben's wife, a country-woman of about four or five and thirty, who had once been an exceedingly pretty girl, and retained abundant traces of former beauty, was peeping into the black vessel to see that all was going on right within.

Ben and his wife had married early, and three children, of many, were still left to them: a stout, well-grown boy of about fifteen, known in history as young Ben: another boy of about eight, usually called little Charley, a rosy, curly-headed, cheerful urchin, full of fun and mischief; and a girl of about thirteen, very like her mother, who was knitting blue worsted stockings for her father at the moment he entered, while her elder brother was cutting out the soles for wooden shoes, and the urchin was teasing the familiar cat, till pussy put out her claws and took to the defensive. Round about were shelves, upholding

various kinds of wares, well garnished in most instances, especially with neat white plates and dishes, and manifold wooden bowls and spoons. Every one started up, or turned round, to welcome home the father of the family. The girl laid down her knitting, the son put away his work, the wife gave him a kiss of welcome, and the urchin pulled his smock-frock, and said, "You are wet, daddy." But we must not pause any further upon the cottager's welcome home, for we have other matter on hand, to which it is necessary now to turn.

CHAPTER II.

THE IDIOT AND THE TOURIST.

"Halloo, halloo, halloo!" cried a voice about half a mile down in the moor, just as the two labourers were entering the little wood, "here, here! you are going wrong, straight on, straight on!—halloo! hoy! halloo!"

These words were not addressed to the two men on the road, though the tone was loud enough, and the voice was strong enough, to be heard half over the moor. The figure from which this voice proceeded was not one which the eye could pass over without remark. It was that of a man perhaps of eight or nine and twenty years of age; but although plenty of time had been allowed him to grow, if he had been so disposed, yet he had never reached the altitude of five feet and an inch, and would have looked like a boy had not a head prematurely gray, and a great width of frame, shown that he had at least attained the period of manhood. In point of width, indeed, it seemed as if Nature, having curtailed him of his fair proportion in height, had endeavoured to make compensation, like a bad architect, by running out the building to an enormous extent on either side. His limbs, too, were all powerful, though somewhat short; and the face was broad, like the person, with coarse bad features, perhaps not altogether without expression, though generally vacant, and, when lighted up by a ray of intel-

lect, showing nought that was good or pleasing. The eyes themselves—small, gray, keen, and uncertain—rendered the look always sinister. One of them must have squinted violently, but which of them it was could not easily be discovered, for it was alternately the right eye and the left that was nearest to the round and turned-up nose. He was dressed, according to the old phraseology, in hodden gray, with a pair of strong but light-lacing boots upon his feet, which were small in proportion to his body, and of which he was wonderfully vain. On his head was a knitted cap, very much like those worn, or rather carried, I should say, by the boys of the Blue-Coat School, and in front of this cap was stuck on all occasions a twig of heath, fresh when it was in blossom, withered when the season was passed. Such was Tommy Hicks, the Idiot of Brownswick, as he was usually called, and, as far as want of intellect to guide him aright was concerned, the appellation was correct. It is curious, however, to remark how Nature distinctly defines the difference between cunning and sense in such unfortunate beings as he of whom I speak. Very few of the wisest men in Brownswick could match Tommy Hicks in cunning; and it not unfrequently happened that, when brought before the magistrates for some of his offences, he would pose the whole bench by his wild but shrewd replies. His mother had left a small property at her death to be employed in his maintenance, so that Tommy Hicks could always get clothes and food at the cottage of an old man and woman at the bottom of the moor. But very often he would be out for days, weeks—nay months—together, and in the course of his wanderings he had been the inmate of several workhouses and two gaols; for he did not at

all deserve the name often bestowed on persons of his peculiar degree of capacity, and Tommy Hicks was by no means an innocent.

The person to whom his shouts were addressed had reason to feel that such was the case, for, following incautiously the directions he received, he plunged up to his knees in a marshy piece of ground, and at another step would have had the swamp over his head, while Tommy Hicks stood looking on, with his hands in his pockets, enjoying the scene amazingly, but not suffering his satisfaction to display itself in anything beyond a grin which stretched his wide mouth from ear to ear, and showed all his white irregular teeth. The stranger was a tall man, a strong and a quick one, and perceiving instantly the trick which had been played him, he drew back a step or two, walked quickly round the edge of the swamp to the spot where Tommy Hicks still stood, and, catching him by the collar, threatened to punish him on the spot for what he had done. For an instant the idiot struggled in his grasp with tremendous force, but he speedily found that his opponent was still stronger than himself, and ceasing his efforts, he said, in a sullen tone, "It is your own fault, master; I told you to go straight on, and you went too agee."

"You can lie, too—can you?" said the other; "come, march on, and show me the way, as you engaged to do, or I will thrash you heartily."

"You may not catch me quite so easily another time," said Tommy Hicks.

"Oh, I will catch you," answered the other, "or find you out afterwards. What's your name, my man?"

"Jack o' Lantern," answered Tommy Hicks, readily, and the stranger, laughing, gave him a push forward, saying,—

"Well, get on, get on; it is coming on to rain, and you shall have the shilling I promised when we reach the house."

Tommy Hicks muttered something to himself, in which the only distinct word was "Shilling!" and then, being free from his companion's grasp, walked on at a stout pace, talking wildly to the wind and rain as they blew and beat against him, and seeming to forget altogether the little quarrel that had taken place. It was not so, however. Tommy Hicks did not forget such things, and, though his thoughts wandered, his purposes were generally fixed. Instead of taking his way direct towards the road above, the idiot sidled away in the direction of the wood, and when he had come within about fifty yards of it, at a spot where the ground was broken and irregular and the paths very difficult to be traced even in broad daylight, he darted away, with a shout of laughter, and, plunging into the wood, was lost in a moment to the eyes of the person who followed.

The stranger stood and gazed around him for a moment or two, murmuring, "This is very pleasant. Well, it can't be helped; I have passed worse nights than this may be, let it rain as hard as it will, and though I may have no other bed than the moor. I will follow up the edge of the wood; I never yet saw a wood without a road through it;" and pursuing this sage determination, he turned his face to the wind and storm, breasting the slope nobly.

It needed a good deal of precaution to find his way along without stumbling, for the ground was rough and uneven, covered with tufts of heath and gorse, and wherever a broken bank gave the bramble an opportunity of hanging itself, there it was ready, with its long arms and sharp claws, to seize upon the traveller's leg, and scratch, *if it* could not detain him

He was well loaded, too, for strapped upon his shoulders was a capacious knapsack, apparently completely filled, but nevertheless he strode on manfully, and at length reached the road along which the two labourers had walked some ten minutes before. Judging at once that his way could not lie to the right—not from any knowledge of the country, not from any dependence on the idiot's previous guiding, but from an habitual or intuitive discernment of the bearings of places—he turned directly to the left, walked on a little way, and then to his joy and satisfaction beheld a light like a bright eye look out over the hedgerows. Advancing further in search of a path leading to it, he observed several more lights on both sides; but he was constant to his first love, and making his way onward, in about five minutes more he was knocking with his knuckles at Ben Halliday's door.

The loud "Come in!" was pronounced in the broad Cumberland accent, and, entering the cottage, the traveller saw the labourer and his family seated round an abundant bowl of very good potato-soup, with certain pieces of meat in it, to the whole of which an onion had lent a flavour by no means disagreeable to the nose of the hungry. Everything was cheerful, contented, and happy. The handsome and intelligent faces of the labourer and his wife, the clean and respectable look and orderly demeanour of the children, all afforded assurance to their visitor that he had fallen into better hands than when he trusted himself to the guidance of an idiot, and he paused for a moment ere he spoke, gazing over the scene, where the assembled family stared at him in return.

"I beg your pardon," said the stranger, at length, addressing himself to Ben Halliday, who by this time

had risen, "but I have lost my way upon this moor, and have got exceedingly wet for my pains."

"Good Lord, then," exclaimed Ben, interrupting him, "it was you I heard shouting! Well, sir, I am very sorry I did not come down, but you see, my cousin Jacob vowed that it was the silly fellow Tommy Hicks, and I never like to bring Jacob and Tommy together, for Jacob is always dire with the lad, and vows he will break his bones."

"I dare say it was the fool whom you heard," answered the visitor, "for the truth is, I was detained just at the foot of the moor by an accident that happened, and meeting with a fellow in a gray coat, I asked him if he could show me my way across, which he undertook to do, and led me into a marsh."

Ben Halliday laughed: "Well, he's a mischievous devil!" he said, "and as full of spite as a cat. I beg your pardon for laughing, sir; but no one in these parts would have trusted Tommy Hicks to guide them. But pray come in to the fire, and dry yourself. Here's some broth, quite hot. Poor stuff enough, but it will warm you."

The stranger accepted frankly and willingly the hospitality offered, sat down by the fire-side, threw off his knapsack, took a porringer of soup and a lump of bread, and soon was quite at home in the cottage. He talked and laughed with Ben and his wife, he played with Charley, he even stroked the cat when she came purring round his legs. His frank and unceremonious bearing was strong recommendation to the worthy people within; and his appearance was also very prepossessing.

He was a man of perhaps six and twenty, and, as has been before said, was uncommonly powerfully, though lightly, made; one of those thin-flanked,

broad-chested men, who have more of the Apollo than the Hercules in their form. His features were straight and fine, with dark blue eyes and long black lashes and brows, dark brown hair and whiskers. His complexion, too, was fresh and ruddy, not with a rosy spot on either cheek, like a head upon a sign-post; but all in one general glow from health and exposure. His hands, however, looked fine and delicate; and his dress somewhat puzzled the cottagers at first; for it was of that sort which might have belonged to several classes. It was all of one material, except the shoes and the covering for his head, being of a black and white woollen check, then not so commonly worn by gentlemen as now; and when he entered, he wore a plain Lowland bonnet, which might have suited a grazier or good Cheviot farmer perhaps better than himself, for a certain sort of harmony was wanting between the person and the dress, and it was this discrepancy which, as I have said, puzzled the family of Ben Halliday.

As the moments passed by, however, their doubts ceased. There was no mistaking the station of their guest after a quarter of an hour was gone. The southern tongue, the clear, distinct, and rapid articulation, the grace and ease of every movement, the unconscious dignity of carriage, even when playing with the boy, had as convincing an effect as if he had given a long catalogue of honourable ancestors. During that quarter of an hour the visitor had said not one word of himself, whither he was going, whence he came, or what he sought; and with a delicacy not unfrequent in the cottages of mountaineers the good peasant would not have asked a question for the world, as long as he saw his guest contented with his homely fare, and a seat at his fireside. And

he did seem contented; so much so, indeed, as to win greatly upon his hosts; for there is an implied compliment of a very kindly character in the cheerful and unaffected acceptance of what a poor man can do to entertain us, which is worth all the condescension in the world.

At length, however, the young gentleman rose with a sigh, as if he really felt regret at going, and said, "I must wend on my way, my good friends, with many thanks for your hospitality. I dare say it has done raining by this time; but as I cannot well go on to the place where I intended to sleep, so late at night, I will thank you much if you can direct me to some inn or public-house where I can get a good clean bed."

The principle upon which a peasant scratches his head in a case of puzzle has often been a question of deep interest to me, but I have never been able to solve the problem. Whether it is that he seeks by a natural instinct to stimulate the organ of cogitation, or whether it is that the unusual exercise of something within the skull makes its external teguments itch, or whether there is an irresistible inclination in man's nature to do something with the hands when the mind is busy, and that the first thing that presents itself to work upon is the head, I do not know, but certain it is that Ben Halliday was in a puzzle, and did scratch a spot a little above the left ear with a great deal of vigour and determination.

"Well now, sir," he said, at length, "if you had asked for anything else in the world I could have better told you where to find it than a public-house. There is not a place where you would like to sleep, I think, nearer than Brownswick."

"Why, my good friend, that is just where I have

come from," replied his visitor; "and I should not like to go back again over the moor to-night."

Ben Halliday was exceedingly disposed to be hospitable, and so was his wife, and they looked at each other for a moment or two, as if inquiring what could be done. But there are things in this world which are impossible, though I at one time thought there were not. Now, such a thing as a spare room is not to be expected in a labourer's cottage, and no such convenience was to be found in that of Ben Halliday. All the beds he possessed had their tenants, and therefore to lodge the stranger seemed quite out of the question. While he was pondering upon the subject, however, the conversation and cogitation were suddenly interrupted by the door being flung open and his cousin Jacob presenting himself. The man gave a hasty glance round the cottage, and then inquired, "Have you seen anything of my boy, Bill? He has not come home yet, Ben, and he was out upon the moor."

Jacob Halliday's eyes had only rested casually on the stranger for a moment, but when Ben and his son had both replied that they had seen nothing of the boy, the young gentleman joined in the conversation, demanding, in a grave tone, "What is he like, my good friend?"

"Why, sir, he is a boy of about twelve years old," replied Jacob Halliday. "He has got on a short jacket and leggings."

"Has he black curly hair?" asked the stranger.

"Yes, sir—have you seen him?" demanded Jacob, eagerly.

"Yes, I think I have," answered the young gentleman; "he was down at the bottom of the moor when I was coming up from Brownswick.—Now, do not

alarm yourself, my good man, for he will do very well, and there is no danger, but he has met with a little accident, if it be the lad I mean."

Jacob Halliday, a man of a warm and excitable disposition and quick imagination, sank down into a wooden chair by the table, and, with his hands resting on his knees, sat gazing in the stranger's face.

"I assure you he will do very well," said the stranger, who felt for his anxiety; "I had him attended to by a surgeon immediately, who assured me there was not the least danger—it was that which detained me so late," he continued, turning towards Ben Halliday, "and the people to whose cottage I carried him promised to send somebody up to let his father know."

"Will you have the goodness to let me hear all about it, sir?" said Jacob, with as much calmness as he could assume.

"Certainly," replied the young gentleman. "I have been taking a tour on foot through this part of Cumberland, and I set out about three o'clock from Brownswick, to walk up to the house of a gentleman on the other side of the moor, but just as I had come out of a village—I don't know its name——"

"Ay, it is Allenchurch," said Ben Halliday.

"And had gone about a half a mile upon the moor, just where the path crosses a little stream, I saw a nice-looking boy lying on his back on the bank."

"Ah, my poor lad!" cried Jacob.

"As he seemed in some pain," continued the gentleman, "I stopped to ask what was the matter, and he told me that as he was crossing the little wooden bridge a part of it broke down under his feet, and he fell forward, catching his leg against the broken part. He had contrived to scramble to the bank, he said,

but he could not stand; and after examining his leg, I thought it better to take him up in my arms, and carry him to a cottage which I had seen not far off. I found an old man and woman there of the name of Grimly, who kindly took him in, and put him to bed. I sent the old man off to Brownswick for a surgeon, and waited till he had come and set the leg. He assured me that there was no danger, and that he would soon be well; and making the people promise to let you know, I came on myself, for by that time the sun was going down."

"And so the poor boy's leg is broke," cried Jacob Halliday, starting up. "I will bet a crown that that devil, Tommy Hicks, is at the bottom of it—breaking down the bridge or something. I will break his bones for him, that I will."

"Nonsense, nonsense, Jacob!" cried Ben, as the other moved towards the door; "don't you go to do the poor lad a mischief, for you don't know what. Go and see your boy, and how he is going on; but if you find Tommy there, have nothing to say to him till you find you have got reason."

"And I will go up and tell Margaret," said Mistress Halliday, "and stay with her till you come back."

"Thank you, thank you, Bella," said Jacob; "but you had better tell her I shall rest down there, most likely; for I won't leave Bill alone in that devil's den, and I will bring him up to-morrow, if I can find an easy cart."

"I dare say Mr. Graham will lend you his spring van," replied Ben Halliday. "I'll go up early to-morrow, and ask him."

"Do, do, Ben," answered his cousin, "and send down young Ben to let me know."

Thus saying he quitted the cottage, and was closing the door without uttering a word of thanks to the stranger; but suddenly his heart smote him for ingratitude, and putting his head in again, he said,—

"I forgot to thank you, sir, for all your kindness to my poor boy; but it is not for want of feeling it, I can promise you, and I hope I shall be able to speak it out some other time."

"Never mind!" answered the young gentleman; "I require no thanks, my good friend. God speed you, and give your son a quick recovery."

As soon as the door had closed on Jacob Halliday, and while Ben's wife was putting on her worst straw-bonnet and thickest cloak to go out upon her charitable errand, the young gentleman turned to Ben, saying,—

"You mentioned Mr. Graham's name just now. Pray is that Mr. Anthony Graham, the banker, of Brownswick?"

"Yes, sir," answered Ben; "Jacob and I are two of his men; and a better master or kinder man doesn't live."

"Pray is his house far from here?" demanded the visitor. "I found a letter from him at Brownswick, inviting me to stay with him for a few days; and it was there I was going when the idiot led me into all the swamps he could find."

"It isn't much above half a mile," answered Ben: "why, we are upon his ground now, sir, and I am sure he will be very glad to see you. Lord, if you had told me that before, it would have saved us all that thinking about public-houses! Mr. Graham would never have forgiven me if I had let you go to an inn, even if there had been one to go to, when you

were invited to his house up there. He has a great sight of company with him, come to shoot, and all that; and if they expect you, sir, I should not wonder if they were waiting for you before they take their dinner; for they dine when we sup."

"I cannot well present myself in such a wet and muddy condition," said Ben's visitor, in a musing tone.

Ben looked at his knapsack, which lay on the floor near the fire, as if he thought that it must contain wherewithal to improve his guest's outward appearance; but the other divining instantly what he meant, replied to the glance,—

"No, that will not do. There is nothing in it but some geological specimens, and the linen I have used since I came from Keswick. I sent up my portmanteau from Brownswick. If you will allow me, I will stay half an hour longer here till I am sure they are gone to dinner, and then ask your boy to show me the way."

"I will go myself, sir," answered Ben Halliday; and while his wife went up to console Jacob's helpmate under the misfortune which had happened to her son, the good man remained to entertain his guest.

The sons and the daughter amused themselves quietly apart, and the conversation between the cottager and the gentleman took a more serious turn than it had previously assumed, running upon the state of the peasantry in that part of the country, their wants and wishes, their notions and their feelings. The stranger questioned with apparent interest, and Ben Halliday answered with frank straightforwardness. His replies were not brilliant enough to admit of transcription, though there was a good deal of plain sense in them; but the stranger found,

not a little to his surprise, that without any vehement discontent or political fanaticism, even Ben Halliday himself was a good deal prepossessed in favour of "The People's Charter." The good man assured him that the same feelings were very general throughout all that part of the country; and he seemed so calm and reasonable, that his guest applied himself to prove to him that what was sought could not be granted with safety to the institutions of the country, and, if granted, would only prove detrimental to the very classes who demanded it. He pressed him close with various arguments, and Ben answered briefly, from time to time, but at length the labourer paused for a moment or two thoughtfully, and then replied:

"I dare say it is very true, sir, what you say; and I never pretend that the charter is the best thing that could be invented; but of one thing I am very certain, that gentlemen must either allow us a hand in making the laws which govern us, or make laws to protect us against oppression. It is all very well saying, as I have heard some say, that labour must find its own market like anything else, and that it is but a commodity that is bought and sold, and such like; but there's a difference between it and other commodities; for it must eat and drink, and will eat and drink; and the market is not a fair one, for everything is done by law for the buyer, and nothing for the seller; and all the while, in the nature of things, the commodity won't keep, so that the buyer gets it at what price he likes. I don't understand much of these things, sir, although I have heard some of the lecturer people hold forth about them; but one thing I do know, which is, that hunger is a hard task-master, and that rich men can use him, if they like, to drive poor men to anything. It is a sort of power

they have beyond the law, and if those who govern the country—parliaments, or ministers, or whatever they may be—do not take care that masters, and farmers, and landlords, and such like, do not abuse that power, they may some time or another find out that patience and suffering will not last for ever. I should be very sorry to see that day, for I know well that the poor would, in the end, do no good to themselves, and a great deal of harm to the rich; and amongst the rich, whether they be manufacturing gentlemen or landlords, or what not, there are a great many as good men as ever lived—such as my master here, and I am sure I would fight for his property to the last drop of my blood; but I can see very well that there is a sort of bitter discontent spreading fast amongst us labourers, and growing blacker and blacker, just like a cloud coming over the sky, which will end in a storm. It used not to be so long ago, but the new poor-law has done a great deal to make the change, for that first showed the people clearly that the rich were ready enough to take care of their own money, while they refused to do anything to better the labourer's condition, or to make his master deal fairly by him."

The guest listened attentively, and then mused; but whether he saw that argument would have no effect, or believed that there might be some truth in the cottager's views, he did not answer, and at length, taking out his watch, he said,—

"Now, I think I will go, my good friend, for it is half-past seven, and, in all probability, they will be at dinner before I reach the house."

CHAPTER III.

THE COUNTRY BANKER.

Every man should build his own house, if he can afford to pamper his peculiarities; for the mind, which has been compared to many things, is, in fact, like a fragment of rock fallen off from the crag, full of knobs and angles, and odd corners, of all sorts of shapes and sizes, and there are many hundred millions of chances to one that—in all the multitude of sheaths or cases which are daily constructed for bodies and souls on this earth—you will not get one which will fit exactly any particular specimen of mind which has been reft from the great rock. Man must have corners for his oddities, and nobody can make them for him but himself.

Now, Mr. Graham had built his own house some ten or fifteen years before the period of which I write, and a very comfortable house it was—large, roomy, well arranged, not what is called magnificent, because Mr. Graham had on certain subjects a great fund of good sense, and having become wealthy (after having been by no means so) in consequence of the increasing prosperity in manufactures of the town of Brownswick, in which his was the only bank, he had a strong notion that anything like ostentation would make people remember, rather than forget, that he had not always been as rich as he now was. He was a man of a very active and cultivated mind, and of a disposition both liberal and enterprising; he loved to do good to all around him, to see happy faces, and to know there were happy hearts. He had been in-

dustrious himself, and he loved to encourage industry. His principal object in buying a large tract of what had been considered waste land, and in bringing it into cultivation, was to give employment to the peasantry of a poor district; and in dealing with them he did not so much consider at what rate he could get their labour as what wages he could properly afford to give. He did not at all wish to do any injury to the neighbouring farmers or gentlemen by giving higher wages than it was fair to give. That was not at all his object, and, throwing such considerations entirely out of the question, he only asked himself what was fair. The plan succeeded wonderfully: first, in making one half of his neighbours hate him mortally; secondly, in making all the poor people love him warmly; thirdly, in gaining for him all the best labourers in the county; and, fourthly, in rendering the estate exceedingly productive at the very time when every market-day heard prognostications of his never getting a penny of return.

But this was only one of many successful speculations. He was always ready to enter into anything which held out even a tolerable prospect. He lent money to one manufacturer, who could not get on without; he took a share in a mill which was likely to be stopped for want of funds; he bought up a great quantity of produce which was to be sold at a period of depression. If a contract was offered, he was ready to take it on the most favourable terms—and in all he was successful. The manufacturer to whom he had lent money prospered; the mill went on; the period of depression passed away, and prices rose; the contract proved a good one. Some attributed all this to Mr. Graham's luck, some to a keen foresight

to coming events, some to the possession of great wealth, which enabled him to hold on while others were obliged to sell. There was, perhaps, a little of all in the business, and great luck he certainly had, for his least hopeful speculations were often more successful than the most promising. However, so it was, Mr. Graham was a very prosperous man.

The situation which he had chosen for his house turned out a good one, though people at first thought it would be bad. The moorland lying to the north-west was separated from his grounds, or park, as the people called them, by several masses of wood, large and small, to which he added young plantations, arranged with great taste. In front of the house, while it was building, stretched out, sloping to the southward, some two hundred acres of open ground, rather unpleasantly soft to the foot, with more rushes and moss than were altogether beautiful or agreeable; while at the bottom of this marshy tract was a thick mass of tall old trees, some oaks, but more frequently pines, which cut off entirely the view of the lake. But Mr. Graham set to work, ploughed and harrowed the whole of the open space, drained it upon a plan of his own, gave it a greater inclination away from the house, cropped it, cleansed it thoroughly, and then laid it down in grass. By the time the house was inhabitable, for it occupied nearly four years in building and fitting up, Mr. Graham had as fine a lawn as ever was seen. He then attacked the wood, and cut his way clear through, till there was not a window on that side which had not a peep of the lake. He did nothing rashly, however. The oaks in general were spared, and he so arranged it, that when the winter wind tore off the brown leaves from the deciduous tree, a tall old pine or fir appeared through

the stripped branches. Neither did he anywhere afford a view of the whole lake or of either end—it was too small for that. The cutting was so arranged, and the trees left standing were in such a position, that from one window you got a view of one part of the sheet of water and the hills behind, and from another of a different portion, without ever seeing beginning or end. There was a mystery about the extent, which is always pleasant. The lines of land and water lost themselves among the trees; and Imagination might go on prolonging them for ever if she liked, behind the woody screen, in whatever way suited her best at the moment. In summer it was, indeed, a beautiful scene, with the green slope and the dark broken wood, and the catches of the sunshiny lake, with tall, bare, misty mountains rising blue behind. Often, too, to give greater magic to the scene, a white-sailed boat would skim across the face of the waters, be lost behind some of the masses of trees, and then reappear, till hidden at length entirely behind the part of the old wood which had been left standing.

A little stream, too, which, flowing down in former times from the moor, had lost itself in the savannah before the house, and in rainy weather had turned it into a swamp, now collected in a fixed bed with one or two other small brooks, was led along till it reached the top of a rocky bank some twelve or fourteen feet high, and was there left to leap over at its own discretion, forming a cascade within sight, produced indeed by art in which no art was apparent. Nobody who had not seen the place before, ever fancied that the stream had had another bed.

In all these things, as I have before said, Mr. Graham had been very successful. In one point

in life, however, he had not been so, and it was an important one. Whenever a man suffers himself to be led in pursuit of an object not consonant to his general views and disposition, he is sure to get into a scrape. Mr. Graham was not naturally an ambitious man, but some four-and-twenty years before, when he was nearly forty, he had done a little bit of ambition. In the straitened circumstances of his early days he had remained single, but as prosperity visited him, and wealth increased, he began to sigh for domestic happiness. He was an enterprising man, as I have said; and he married a lady without knowing very much of her character. All he did know was, that she was handsome, about thirty years of age, the daughter of a baronet, whose father had been lord mayor of London, and whose sister had married a poor peer. It was not a hopeful concatenation for a country banker, Mr. Graham. Nevertheless, something might be said in your defence. One might suppose that the civic origin of the family dignity, the three turtle-shells rampant in the arms, might keep down aristocratic pride. Such, however, was not the case.

Mrs. Graham's father had spent a great deal of what her grandfather had made; and yet, young, single, and handsome, she had seen no reason why she should not marry a peer as well as her aunt. Peers thought otherwise, however, and did not marry her; considering a little, perhaps, that she had but five thousand pounds for her portion, when her aunt had had fifty. At twenty-six, she began to imagine that a baronet or an honourable would do; but they did not come. At thirty, her father was dead, her brother ruined, some gray hairs were mingling with the black, and she married a rich country banker. But her temper was

by this time soured, and her pride not a whit quelled. She fancied she was condescending to Mr. Graham—nay, more, that she was lowering herself. She felt a degree of spite at herself and him for what she had done, and her only consolation was, that he was rich enough to enable her to domineer over all the families in the neighbourhood.

Now, Mr. Graham did not approve of her consolation at all. He did not consider himself honoured in the least degree; he did not think his wealth or her assumed station gave her any right to treat his friends on any terms but those of equality. He was not weak enough to yield upon such a subject while there was a hope of a change; and during the two first years of their union he reasoned, remonstrated, even reproved, but all in vain; and when their first and second child were born dead, Mrs. Graham informed him that it was his ill-temper which had caused the misfortune. There are many ladies who love their faults far better than anything else, and would not part with them for the world; and, in general, although a husband may consider it his duty to get rid of them as fast as possible, yet he will generally suffer his wife to keep them, if she does but adhere to them with a certain degree of pertinacity. This very incorrigibleness secures them. The maxim embodied in the words "Anything for a quiet life," has done more harm in domestic matters than any other saw that was ever propounded. A man marries for a cheerful and happy home, if he does not marry solely for love; and when he finds that the object is only to be obtained, even in part, on the condition of tolerating his wife's faults, he is sure to yield to them in the end. So did Mr. Graham. He contented himself with doing the best he could

to make every one forget his fine lady's petulant haughtiness by his own urbanity; but it cannot be said that he was very successful. People rarely forgive that which mortifies their pride, and thus, through a great part of the neighbouring society, Mrs. Graham was disliked for her bad qualities, and Mr. Graham for his good. He had one consolation, however,—he was universally loved by the poor, and he felt it.

But one living child tended to soften the discomfort of Mr. Graham's home, and she was a comfort indeed. She had her mother's beauty, but many of the finer qualities of her father, and she clung to him with fond and eager attachment. Her mother was fond of her, too, because she was like herself in person; but she often wished that her daughter was not so poor spirited, and would not, in ball or assembly, go over and talk to those girls, the ——s, who dressed so badly, and were little taken notice of by anybody.

It is time, however, to go into Mr. Graham's house and see the interior, and we shall beg the reader to walk at once into the dining-room, on the same cold, windy, autumnal night to which the two preceding chapters have been devoted. It was a large, handsome room, beautifully proportioned, with walls decorated with pilasters, between which hung some fine pictures by both modern and ancient artists. All the ornamental parts were very quiet, chaste, and in good taste, and the draperies which now hung over the windows, though rich in themselves, had not the least bit of gold upon them. A large bronze lamp hung from the ceiling in the centre of the room, with the glasses so shaded that the light fell less upon the faces of the guests than upon the table, round which

some sixteen persons were congregated. The plate which decorated the board was somewhat ancient in form, and though there was plenty of it, yet there was no great display. It might have been heavier, more rich in design, more ornamental, but everything that could be wanted was there, and Mr Graham thought the plainer it was the better.

The dinner, indeed, was somewhat more ostentatious, but that was Mrs. Graham's affair; and though it was not vulgar from its profusion—for she had a French cook who would not tolerate such a thing—it was a great deal too refined for a number of her husband's guests. Mrs. Graham did not care about that, however; it suited her own guests, and be it remarked that she made a great distinction between her own and her husband's. Those whom she thus specially appropriated to herself consisted of four persons whom she had seduced into Cumberland: a Lady Jane Somebody, with long flaxen ringlets, a very beautiful and most delicate complexion, light blue eyes, and a rather over-wide mouth; her brother, the Honourable Captain Something, with light moustache, and wristbands that turned back over the cuffs of his coat. He thought himself like Charles I., and looked melancholy. Indeed, poor man, he was very much bored. Then there was a post-captain in the navy named Hales, at least so I will name him, distantly related to one or two noble families, and hanging on upon several others. It was long since he had seen any service, was very quiet and insignificant, fond of shooting and fishing, played well at billiards and piquet, liked good dinners, and frequented country houses where they grew. He was, moreover, a tall, well-dressed, good-looking man, who made him-

self useful as well as ornamental. The fourth was a baronet, a member of Parliament, a sucking politician, aspiring to office for the honour rather than the profit of the thing, for he was wealthy; but he had a vehement conceit in his own powers, wearied the House with large-worded speeches, and not very apposite quotations in Greek and Latin, for he had lately come from Oxford, and had visited the Ionian Islands; and he was considered a very rising young man, simply because he treated the opinion of everybody with contempt who did not exactly agree with the opinions which he formed himself, or which he was instructed to maintain.

To this gentleman, Sir Arthur Green, Mrs. Graham was particularly attentive and gracious; and, indeed, she had reasons of her own for being so, though he did not know them. In person, he was exceedingly diminutive, except about the hips; which had been intended by Nature for a bigger man, and fitted on him by mistake, and his face, which approached in some degree that of our great prototype, the ape, was alternately moved by a quick and irritable expression when he was speaking himself—as if he thought people were not paying sufficient attention to his notions—and quiescent when others were talking, with a fixed look of cold contempt for the notions of everybody.

The rest of the party consisted of neighbouring gentlemen, most of whom lived at twelve or fourteen miles distance, and therefore slept the night where they dined, and of a family who inhabited one of the houses by the lake near. But they were nobodies, and consequently turned over to Mr. Graham for entertainment and courtesy. Nor did they lack it, Miss Graham perversely aiding her father to the best of

her power, although Mrs. Graham had purposely placed her next to the baronet, in order to admire and be admired. But Margaret Graham would not admire Sir Arthur Green at all. She thought him very ugly, very conceited, and very stupid. She knew nothing about the corn laws, less about the Irish question, and as little of the tariff. But she did not at all approve of the baronet's turning away with a sort of inattentive nonchalance when her father had made some very just and practical observations upon the latter subject, and pursuing his own conversation, as if he either did not hear what Mr. Graham said, or thought it quite unworthy of notice. That was not the way to the daughter's heart; but Mrs. Graham rather admired it.

The second course was nearly concluded, and a great part of the usual subjects of a dinner-table had been exhausted. The country gentlemen had done all they could on the topics of pheasants, hares, grouse, and partridges. It had been declared that not one woodcock had yet been seen in the country; which those who wished for an early winter pronounced a bad sign, and those who desired a late one, a good sign. The markets and the weather had been discussed. Some of the ladies had enjoyed a little bit of scandal, delicately administered by Captain Hales, and it was over. The sucking politician's oratory began to fail. The Honourable Captain Somebody amused himself with an orange-wood toothpick, and looked as if he were about to be led to the block. His sister sat in patient insipidity; and Mrs. Graham herself was beginning to find things rather long, when a servant whispered something to Mr. Graham, who looked pleased, and said—

"Very well, see that he has everything to make

him comfortable.—My dear, Mr. Fairfax has come, and will join us as soon as he has changed his dress."

The name was aristocratic; and Mrs. Graham vouchsafed a smile, inquiring—

"What Fairfax, Mr. Graham?"

"The eldest son of John Fairfax, who was member for Coventry, and nephew of Sir Edward Fairfax," replied her husband, with an inclination to smile; "his father was an old acquaintance of mine, and had many good points, though some very strange ones."

The conversation about Fairfaxes then became general. Everybody knew a Fairfax or something about a Fairfax; and it was just over, and the second course removed, when the dining-room door opened, and Mr. Fairfax was announced. While he came forward and was greeted warmly by Mr. Graham as the son of an old friend, all eyes but those of Sir Arthur Green were turned upon him, and everybody made their comments internally. Sir Arthur did not think anybody worth looking at, and endeavoured to hold Mrs. Graham's attention, by asking if she took any interest in the tobacco question? to which Mrs. Graham replied, with a sweet smile, "Yes, very," and continued to gaze at the new visitor.

He was remarkably handsome—that was the first thing apparent; he was remarkably well-dressed—that was the next observation made; he had all the ease, grace, and self-possession of a man of high station—that was the closing remark; and Mrs. Graham determined that he should be one of her set.

The introduction to his wife and daughter over, Mr. Graham asked if Mr. Fairfax had dined? He replied that he had, at a cottage hard by, where he

had taken shelter from the rain; and, seated opposite to Margaret Graham, he gave an account of his adventures of the evening, lightly, gaily, but mingling touches of kindly feeling and good sense, with merry comments on his own wisdom in putting himself under the guidance of an idiot, in a manner which amused and pleased both father and daughter, while Mrs. Graham declared it was delightful, and the whole party seemed to feel that a new spring of life and pleasure had burst forth in the midst of them, to stir the waters that had been inclined to stagnate. The dessert was the most cheerful part of the meal; and the ladies remained longer than Captain Hales, who was fond of claret, thought considerate. Sir Arthur Green hated Mr. Fairfax, for now nobody paid any more attention to him, than he was accustomed to pay to anybody.

When the whole party assembled in the drawing-room, after that temporary separation which foreigners so much cry out upon, music and cards succeeded; but Mr. Fairfax would have nothing to do with the latter, and kept a position near the piano, especially while Margaret Graham was singing.

Her voice had not been much cultivated, but it was exceedingly sweet, and feeling and taste did more for the expression of her singing than all the teaching in the world could have effected. Mr. Fairfax seemed delighted, and talked to her a great deal about music, and from music they rambled on to painting, and from painting to poetry, so that they might have gone through the whole circle of the arts, had not Mrs. Graham called the young gentleman to the other side of the room to look at some beautiful engravings which were laid upon a table. Such, at least, was Mrs. Graham's pretext; for to say truth, she cared

not a straw whether Mr. Fairfax looked at the engravings or not. Certainly society is a strange thing, and the devil must have had some hand in its construction; for we are told that he is the father of lies, and the whole fabric is filled with his offspring. In reality and truth, Mrs. Graham had for the last half-hour been observing her daughter and Mr. Fairfax. His handsome person, his high-toned air and manner, and his very gentlemanly appearance, seriously alarmed Mrs. Graham for the success of her scheme for marrying Margaret to Sir Arthur Green. She saw Margaret's eyes sparkle with a much brighter look than usual, and her cheek grow warmer with excitement, as she listened to a sort of conversation that she had never heard before, and Mrs. Graham reckoned that such a man as Mr. Fairfax would prove a very dangerous rival to the monkey-faced, consequential, little being, upon whom she had cast the eyes of affection. Wisely, very wisely, she did not make up her mind to do anything that might check Mr. Fairfax's growing admiration for her daughter; for she thought, judging by what her husband had said of his family, that he himself might be no bad match for Margaret, failing Sir Arthur Green; and, in the meantime, the stimulus of rivalry might prove a sort of hothouse, and bring the baronet's passion rapidly into full bloom. She determined, however, in the first place, to make herself quite sure, from Mr. Fairfax's own mouth, of various little particulars in his situation which her husband had left doubtful. Her first address to him, therefore, after she had given a reasonable time for the inspection of the engravings, was to the following effect, and delivered with a smile and a look of interest,—

"Do you know, Mr. Fairfax, I think I must have

been very well acquainted in former years with some of your relations? You are eldest son, Mr. Graham said, of Mr. John Fairfax, who was member for Coventry."

"The same, my dear madam," answered the young gentleman, gravely, and still looking at the engraving of the "Assumption of the Blessed Virgin."

"Well, then, I must have known your uncle," continued the lady, "at the house of my uncle, Lord Twinkleton. Was he not Sir Edward Fairfax at that time—a colonel in the army, I think?"

"No, he is not in the army," replied Mr. Fairfax, looking up; "he is now an admiral, but has only been so two or three years."

"Ah! I must have made a mistake," said Mrs. Graham; "I knew he was either in the army or navy. How is Lady Fairfax?"

"Don't frighten me, my dear madam," said her young guest, laughing; "if there is a Lady Fairfax in my family, she must have become so within the last ten days, and the very idea of my uncle marrying is tantamount to a charge of lunacy, which you know is a disagreeable circumstance in a man's race. You forget how time flies, dear lady; he is now seventy-three, and though the best and kindest man in the world, is eaten up with gout."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, apparently in great surprise; "then was he never married?"

"Never," replied Mr. Fairfax, "that I know of; and I think, as I am his adopted son, and have been brought up entirely by him almost from my birth, now five-and-twenty years ago, I must have heard of it if such had been the case."

"How strange that I should make such a mistake!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham.

She was now quite satisfied. Nephew, heir, and adopted son of an old and highly respectable baronet, Mr. Fairfax was quite the sort of man whom she liked; and she determined from that moment to let him take his chance against Sir Arthur Green, without favour to either party, although, if there was a bias, it was to have her daughter called Lady Fairfax rather than Lady Green. Besides, he was such a handsome, distinguished-looking man too, and that was no slight matter in Mrs. Graham's opinion.

About five or ten minutes after, Mrs. Graham slipped out of the room, and made her way to the library, where she studied "Burke's Peerage and Baronetage" for a short time. When she returned, her face became quite radiant to see Mr. Fairfax seated beside Margaret again, while Lady Jane Something played a fantasia on the piano, and Sir Arthur Green, with the air of a connoisseur, turned over the music in the wrong places. It was evident to Mrs. Graham's eyes that Margaret was well pleased with her companion's conversation. She had never seen her so carried away, as it were, by the presence of any one, and when she approached near enough to hear what was passing, she easily comprehended the cause of the continual variation of expression which took place in her daughter's countenance; the look of half-puzzled thought changing suddenly to that of bright intelligence, then sobering down to gravity, almost sadness, and that again vanishing away in a gay smile or a light laugh. But, in truth, Allan Fairfax's conversation was very peculiar. It went bounding along like a roe from subject to subject, and figure to figure, finding latent resemblances in the heart of apparently dissimilar things, suddenly

setting everything in a new point of view, the most joyful in the darkest and gloomiest aspect, and extracting a smile even from a tragedy. So rapid was the transition, that it was difficult for the mind to follow him; and yet, like a playful child running away from pursuit, he paused every now and then in his gay sport, in order to give the followers time to come up.

Thus passed the first evening of his visit to Mr. Graham's house, and Allan Fairfax retired to his chamber to think rather than to rest.

He sat down and leaned his cheek upon his hand; the gay, lively, sparkling young man was suddenly converted into the grave and thoughtful one; and though he could not be called exactly sad, yet a shade of melancholy came over his face, and he sighed heavily more than once.

"She is very lovely," he said to himself, at length, "she is very lovely, and I must take care. Mine is a hard fate." And with that conclusion he ended.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOVERS' EXPEDITION.

WERE the organ of cautiousness projected till it became almost a horn, and had it all the power of communicating prudent impulses to the conduct of man which some persons attribute to it, still I fear it would be found all-insufficient to keep youth out of temptation. Two, three, four days passed by, and Allan Fairfax was still at Mr. Graham's house. It was shooting one day, hunting another, sauntering a third; and though

Mr. Graham himself was obliged to be absent long on each morning upon the various matters of business in which he was engaged, still he pressed his guests to amuse themselves during his absence, and Mrs. Graham was enchanted to make them as comfortable as possible, inasmuch as they were, after the first day, all of her own particular set; and in that number Mr. Fairfax was now marked out by particular favour. To the greater part of the guests, too, his society was apparently very agreeable. The Honourable Captain Somebody liked him very much, and declared that he rode better than any man he had ever seen out of the —— troop of the —— regiment. Lady Jane thought him, silently, extremely handsome; Captain Hales was, of course, very friendly and civil, though Fairfax shot a great deal better than himself, and Margaret Graham said nothing, but smiled when he approached at first, and then became somewhat thoughtful.

Thoughtful or smiling, however, he was a great deal with her, and, as it so fell out, often alone; for Mrs. Graham's health was by no means good, and Margaret did the honours of her father's house during a great part of the time he was absent each day. She showed Mr. Fairfax the grounds, which were extensive, pointed out to him with pleasure and pride all the changes and improvements Mr. Graham made, and was well pleased to have an auditor who would fully appreciate the taste which her beloved parent had displayed. The only discontented person was Sir Arthur Green, whose consequence vanished from the moment of Mr. Fairfax's appearance, and who, coldly rude before, was inclined to be warmly rude after his arrival. People paid very little attention to him, however, and he did not venture to go

too far. A new life seemed, as I have said, to enter the house with Allan Fairfax. Nobody looked bored any more. There was always something to be seen, something to be done, some amusement, or at least some occupation. Margaret and he and Lady Jane visited the cottages of Ben Halliday and his cousin, inquired after the boy who had been hurt, and talked kindly with the labourers' wives. They called on the clergyman of the parish, and heard all his details of parochial matters, and Margaret listened with pleasure to the contrast which Mr. Fairfax drew between the state of happiness and prosperity which spread around Mr. Graham's dwelling and some other parts of the country which he had lately visited; but a rather unpleasant discussion followed at dinner that day, suggested by some observations made by Fairfax regarding the condition of the lower classes in England. Sir Arthur Green was an ultra-political economist, and, like all fanatics, made a high science ridiculous or hateful by bringing it to bear upon subjects not immediately submitted to it. He looked upon all men but as machines; he spoke of them as such, was inclined to treat them as such. They were, in his opinion, but parts of the great universal manufactory, flesh and blood engines, whose business it was to produce as much as possible at the least imaginable expense. Fairfax reminded him of a slight difference between them and all other machines; that they felt, that they thought, that they loved, that they hated, that they had hearts as well as arms, an immortal spirit as well as a reasoning brain, that the motive power was one he could not supply, and dared not take away.

Nevertheless, the sucking politician went on, assuming much as incontrovertibly proved, which every-

body in the room was inclined to deny, and covering his cold theories with clouds of schoolboy aphorisms, till in the end he declared that he not only thought it extremely foolish, but unjust to the majority, for any man to give one penny more in wages than the very lowest possible sum at which he could obtain the labour required.

"Everything has its market price," he said, "and those who pay more for anything raise the price upon others unjustly."

It was a direct attack upon Mr. Graham's system, but that gentleman did not think fit to notice it further than by replying, with a laugh,—

"If we could kill and eat our peasantry, Sir Arthur, when there are too many of them, as we do our oxen, I believe your plan might succeed; but as the law and our own consciences would not let us do that even if we could, I am afraid the scale of wages must be framed upon other principles. The possessors of property and the employers of labour must pay at least a sufficiency for the support of those dependent on them either in wages, or poor's-rates, or pillage. I like the former mode of payment best—but to change the subject, I have to propose an expedition for to-morrow, which Margaret shall lead, as I must be in Brownswick all day. What think you of a ride over to Brugh, and the Marsh, as we call it? although, be it remarked, there is not an inch of marsh, properly so called, in the whole tract. None of you, I think, have seen it, and it is a very interesting district."

The marked and decided turn given to an unpleasant conversation, cut it short, of course, and all parties agreed that the proposed expedition would be very delightful. Lady Jane, who, Heaven knows

how, found or fancied herself related to the well-known Anne, Countess of Pembroke, to whom Brugh Castle once belonged, besought that it might be included in the ride, and would not be deterred by Mr. Graham's hint that the distance would be very great. She was an indefatigable horsewoman, she said, and she was sure that Margaret would not be tired; the day, too, was certain to be fine; they were just getting the Indian summer, as it was called; November had become as warm as May; and, in short, she was resolved that Brugh Castle should be visited. It is wonderful how pertinacious those fair-haired, wide-mouthed, fine-complexioned girls can be when they like it. Everybody yielded, of course; and it was arranged that the time of departure should be an hour earlier than had been proposed at first.

Oh, the ever eager heart of youth, how it bounds forth upon the course of enjoyment! Well may they call hope a flame and love a fire, for they both consume that which nourishes them, leaving the smoke of disappointment and the ashes of regret. Allan Fairfax lay down that night with a bosom full of bright expectations for the morrow. There was sunshine within; but as when a man gazes over a prospect lighted up by the bright morning rays, he shades his eyes from the orb whence those lustrous beams proceed, while the sight revels in the loveliness they display, so Fairfax, while he looked forward to the coming day with the thrill of anticipated enjoyment, would not let his mind rest upon her from whom all that sunshine flowed. Little had he thought when, on visiting the small town of Brownswick, to receive an inconsiderable sum of money for the further expenses of his tour, and found a letter of invitation to Mr. Graham's house, that the result of his visit

would be the feelings he now experienced—little did he think it, or he would never have come, sweet and charming as those feelings were; but now they were upon him he gave himself up to their influence, not without doubt, and fear, and hesitation, but with the spell of new-born love too strong for mastery.

There was another heart, too, within that house which beat high at the thought of the coming day, but with less fear at the sensations which it itself experienced, though with some timidity. Margaret saw that she was loved, and she felt that, for the first time, she was loved by one whose passion she could return. It made her thrill when she thought of it, but yet it was very sweet, and no anxiety mingled with the feeling, for she knew that her father's whole hopes were in her happiness, and she saw that her mother was well-inclined to smile upon her love.

Every one was awake by daybreak, and every one looked out of the window to see the aspect of the sky. It was gray and shrouded, a light frost lay upon the ground. To Margaret's eyes it looked unpromising; for Fear will come thrusting herself before Hope, at the first obstacle in the course of enjoyment. Still she put on her riding-habit, and, looking bright enough herself to give sunshine to a wintry day, she went down to the breakfast-room, where she found her father and Allan Fairfax. She caught Mr. Graham's eye fixed upon her while she shook hands with the latter, and she thought she saw a slight but well-pleased smile upon his lips. The colour mounted warmly into her cheek, and, turning to the window, she looked out, saying, in a faltering voice,—

"I am afraid it will be a bad day."

"Oh, no! my dear," replied Mr. Graham, "the sky will clear within an hour, and you will have a beautiful morning for your ride. I will not say as much for to-morrow, and even doubt what we shall have to-night, but we may reckon upon eight or ten hours safely."

It was as Mr. Graham said. Before breakfast was over, the gray mist that overspread the sky first broke away into thin clouds, and then disappeared entirely, as if the sun drank them up as he rose to run his race. Mr. Graham mounted Allan Fairfax on a powerful horse, which was accustomed to keep pace with that of his daughter; he lent a good bony hunter to Captain Hales, and the rest of the party had their horses with them. A servant followed, and all seven set out a little before ten, while Mr. Graham got into his phaeton, and drove away to Brownswick.

Proceeding slowly at first along the road towards Brugh, Margaret Graham and the rest of the party soon issued forth upon the banks of the little lake, and skirting round the western side with the reflection of themselves and their horses clear on the surface of the unrippled waters, wound away towards the opposite hills, where the road they were following rose over a narrow neck between two high saddle-shaped mountains, and then descended rapidly to a plain several thousand feet below. From the highest point reached by the road, the view was wild and sublime in the extreme—sublime from its immensity. As far as the eye could see was one vast expanse, unbroken, almost interminable; for the faint boundary which separated it from the distant sky was obscured by a mist so slight, that it blended heaven and earth imperceptibly together. To the right, indeed, faint and far off, could be traced, after

long gazing, several waving lines, like those of clouds, but probably some of the hills of Niddesdale; and on the left were the grand Cumberland mountains, which further on appeared crowned by Skiddaw. I have said that it was uninterrupted, but that wide plain was not unvaried, for although the general hue was in the nearest parts of a bright deep green, and in the distance an intense blue, yet lines of different colours, all profound in their degree, chequered the expanse without injuring the harmony. Here and there was a wide extent of what seemed low wood; beyond, a yellow gleam crossed the plain, then came some undulations almost black, either from the nature of the soil or from a shadow cast by clouds, which the spectator's eye could not discover in the clear sky above. Nature herself relieved the view from monotony, and at the same time marked the vastness of the whole by the variety of colouring. Underneath, almost at the feet of the party who gazed from the hill, were several flocks of sheep and herds of oxen; and others could be distinguished further off, lessening in the distance till they became faint specks, and disappeared.

"There is the Brugh Marsh," said Margaret Graham, in a low, sweet voice, as if almost awed by the grandeur of the scene: "and there lay the camp of Edward I., when the fierce and invincible bowed to a stronger and more permanent conqueror than himself."

"It seems badly cultivated," said Sir Arthur Green. "I wonder no efforts have been made to render it more productive."

Margaret gently shook her horse's bridle, and began to descend the hill. In the infinitely modified varieties of human vanity, the most unpleasant to the

individual and to those who are brought in contact with him, is irritable conceit. The vain man who is not satisfied that all the world thinks as well of him as he thinks of himself, is a wretched creature. Pride, though an isolated passion, is at all events independent: vanity is dependent upon others' opinion for its satisfaction, if not for its support. Sir Arthur Green fancied himself proud, but he was only vain; and a conviction which had been growing upon him that he was by no means particularly pleasing in Margaret's eyes, made him determine to revenge himself by paying all his attentions to Lady Jane. He could not have devised a means of making himself more agreeable to Margaret, and while he thought he was inflicting punishment by attaching himself to the lady of rank, and neglecting altogether the banker's daughter, Margaret Graham was cantering gaily on over Brugh Marsh by the side of Allan Fairfax, enjoying with him all that was beautiful in nature, and, when that failed them, finding stores of happiness like hidden treasures in their own hearts. The two captains rode together, and talked fashionable nonsense to each other; and thus harmoniously paired, they crossed the wide plain towards a spot upon its verge, where, from the heights above, they had seen some small black mounds which constituted the little town of Brugh, and the remains of its old castle. But distances seen from a height are very deceptive to the eye. Every one but Margaret thought they would reach the ruin in an hour: but though they rode fast, hour after hour went by, and it was half-past two before they had stabled their horses at the small inn, to let them feed, and were climbing the slope toward the castle. Fairfax offered Margaret his arm to aid her in the ascent,

and she saw that Lady Jane had made no scruple of accepting such assistance from Sir Arthur Green; but the baronet was evidently—nay, ostentatiously making love, and Allan Fairfax and his fair companion were not. Perhaps there was no need. The other two, however, separated themselves from the rest of the party almost as soon as they reached the old walls. Lady Jane was not at all sorry to have something to amuse her; for Brugh was not enough now she had got there; and therefore she laughed and talked, and showed her fine teeth, and gave the young politician every sort of encouragement to go on both with his soft nothings and his hard facts, without the slightest intention of ever going one step beyond a little innocent flirtation. For some five minutes the other two gentlemen remained with Margaret and her companion; but every one knows how easy it is to break into knots in a ruin, and while Fairfax and Miss Graham were standing in the heart of the great square tower, and gazing up, they found themselves left alone together.

It was a moment of great temptation. Should he tell her, he asked himself, how he loved her, how her beauty, and her grace, and her gentleness had carried him away without power of resistance, and everything in life seemed valueless but her? But no, he would not do it; there was a chain around him which held him back from such happiness as the hope of possessing her. It might be broken, indeed, and her hand might break it, but to do so she must see it, and know it, and the first thing was to tell her all.

"This is very grand," he said, somewhat abruptly; "but do you know, I never see a ruin without its leaving for a long time a melancholy impression."

"I think that is the natural effect," replied Mar-

garet; "or if not melancholy, the impression on my mind is always grave and tending to thought. A ruin is in itself a monument to decay, to that which must be undergone, not only by all, but by the works of all."

"Yes," replied Fairfax, "such things as these we see around us are the mementoes of the inevitable fate—the skull and crossbones to the world's undertakings. But I fear, dear Miss Graham, that the melancholy I feel is more from an individual than a general application of the figure. The sight of a ruin is to me a memorial of my own fate——"

Margaret started with a look of surprise and distress.

"Yes," continued Allan Fairfax, "whenever I see buildings gone to decay, especially where the dilapidation has been effected more by neglect or violence than the natural process of time, I begin, whether I will or not, seeking out similarities between its fate and mine. I see an image of the ruin of bright prospects, and in its hopeless, irreparable desolation, a picture of my future fate."

The tears were in Margaret's eyes when he ended, but gazing down upon the ground, she answered, in a low, sweet voice—

"I have seen many ruins repaired, and made more beautiful than ever. May it not be so with you?"

"You shall judge," answered Fairfax. "I will tell you the whole story, which, though a very strange one, is very short."

"Do," cried Margaret; "it will interest me deeply, I am sure."

"I was born to wealth," said Allan Fairfax, "and I now have nothing—absolutely nothing. Dependent upon the goodness of a kind and excellent old man,

so long as he lives I have affluence, but from the hour of his death, with the exception of my commission, I have nothing."

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried a voice, apparently close to them, "and I have got nothing, either—jolly, jolly nothing," and the squat broad figure and sinister countenance of the idiot, Tommy Hicks, appeared from under the archway of the little door on the west side of the tower.

Allan Fairfax turned upon him angrily. "Get you gone, you mischievous fool," he exclaimed, shaking his horsewhip at him; "if I catch you near me, I will teach you not to mislead a traveller whom you undertake to guide."

The idiot leered at him fearfully. "You had better not touch me," he said; "Tommy can spite them that spite him. You shall have good measure in return, Master Stickinthemud. I wish you had been laid in the bog all night. You would have had a soft bed of it, and might have made the moon your warming-pan, for those sheets are rather damp, I reckon."

Fairfax took a step towards him, but at the same moment Tommy scampered off through the doorway, and Margaret laid her hand upon her lover's arm, saying, "Oh, do not hurt him! The poor creature is quite insane, and does not know what he says or does."

"I only wish to frighten him away," replied Fairfax, "for I would fain end my tale now I have begun it."

Barely two minutes elapsed, however, before Captain Hales rejoined them, saying, "Come here, come here; there is such a beautiful view from the top of the wall where a dumpy fellow in a gray jacket has

guided Lady Jane and Sir Arthur, that they want every one else to see it."

Margaret and Fairfax followed, and although the sweet girl's face was somewhat melancholy when Captain Hales interrupted their conference, yet as they walked along a step behind him over the grass-grown courts and fragments of broken wall, a smile, bright, warm, and meaning, passed over her face, and she said to her companion, in a low tone, "Yet I think even this ruin might be repaired."

"It is in a sad state of dilapidation," said Fairfax, gloomily; but the next instant turning the angle of the great square tower, they came in sight of a high and almost detached piece of the outer wall, on the summit of which stood Lady Jane and Sir Arthur Green, while on the steps up to it, formed by the broken stones of the building, appeared the idiot, with his arms crossed upon his breast, gazing far out over the waste. At the foot of the wall were some large masses of fallen stone, with a plentiful crop of nettles amongst them, and the Honourable Captain Somebody was busily engaged with laudable philanthropy in cutting down with his horsewhip the pungent enemies of urchins' fingers.

"Is that a very safe situation, Lady Jane?" demanded Fairfax, when he reached the bottom of the wall, and remarked the many stones which had been loosened by time, and the apertures left by others which had been taken out to build cottages in the neighbourhood.

"I don't know, Mr. Fairfax," cried the lady, apparently alarmed at his question. "Do you think it is likely to give way? I should like to get down, Sir Arthur—pray help me down."

"Get out of the way, Mister Gray-jacket," said Sir

Arthur Green, giving his hand to Lady Jane, and addressing the idiot, who stood right in the midst of the descent; "I want to pass, my man."

"Well, you may pass, if you can, my minikin pin," said Tommy Hicks, still keeping his arms stoutly crossed upon his chest; "it is a nice airy situation, and you had better stay there till you are bleached, for your mother wove her cloth terrible yellow."

"Get out of the way, you scoundrel, or I will knock you down," cried the little baronet, in a great rage, letting go the hand of Lady Jane, who began to scream, and advancing upon the idiot. But Tommy Hicks, with a movement as quick as lightning, and a loud laugh, gave him a push on the shoulder, which instantly overthrew his balance and cast him down from the wall just above the nettles, which were still undergoing decapitation. The height must have been fourteen feet, and in all probability the little baronet would not have come to the ground safe in life and limb, had he not luckily fallen right upon Lady Jane's brother, who gave way beneath the shock, and both rolled in the bed of nettles together.

Alarmed for the situation of Lady Jane, left alone with the idiot on the top of the wall, Fairfax paused not to look or laugh at a scene which was certainly more comic than tragic, but sprang up at once over the piles of rubbish, which brought his head within a foot or two of the top of the wall. He was stretching out his hand to seize the idiot by the heel, when, with one of his wild halloos, Tommy Hicks sprang off on the other side, and, mounting the wall, Fairfax aided Lady Jane to descend. As he did so, his eye caught the form of Tommy Hicks, scampering off towards the marsh, apparently unhurt, for, though the depth was somewhat greater on that side, the turf

was soft and even. Lady Jane was strongly inclined to faint when she reached the bottom of the descent, but the sight presented by her brother and Sir Arthur Green, who by this time were standing face to face, with both their noses streaming with blood, and strongly inclined to quarrel, touched some ticklish point in her imagination, and, instead of fainting, she burst into a fit of laughter. Captain Hales interposed to calm the two wounded and irritable gentlemen, and the whole party, after a short pause, adjourned to the little inn, to get such luncheon as it could afford before they set out upon their way homeward.

Ere the luncheon was over and the horses saddled, the ill-closed windows of the inn began to rattle with a rising gale, and the sky grew dark and ominous. Then came the mounting in haste, and scampering off, if possible, to outride the storm. But the distance was great, the hour half-past three; night fell while they were still far from their journey's end, and, long ere they reached the foot of the hills, the rain was drifting hard against them, mingled with sharp particles of very fine hail.

The whole party were drenched before they reached the house of Mr. Graham; and gladly did they see the door open and the lights within. Servants hurried to take the horses; but Allan Fairfax thought that he remarked a somewhat different aspect in the men, and as the party separated in haste, each hurrying to his room to change his wet garments, he heard Margaret inquire of her maid, who had come down to meet her—

"Whose gig is that standing near the door?"

"It is old Dr. Kenmore's, Miss Graham," replied the maid; "but you had better come and change

your clothes at once, ma'am, for you are terribly wet."

Allan Fairfax had got some way through his toilet, when, after an introductory tap at the door, the butler entered, with a face exceedingly grave.

"Mrs. Graham has told me to give her compliments to you, sir, and the other gentlemen and ladies," he said, "and to beg you will excuse her and Miss Graham for not appearing at dinner, as Mr. Graham has been taken very ill immediately after his return from Brownswick."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Fairfax, in a tone of unfeigned grief; "what is the matter—do you know?"

"A fit of apoplexy, the doctor says, sir," replied the butler; "but he is a little better since they bled him and poured the water upon his head; and he looks about him a little, though he does not speak. Mrs. Graham told me to say also, sir, that she hoped to have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow, at breakfast."

That evening passed sadly: all the guests preparing to take their departure early on the following morning, although the report of Mr. Graham's health, when they separated for the night, was that he was a good deal better, and all immediate danger over. Most of those present were willing enough to fly from a sick man's house; but Allan Fairfax would fain have lingered, had he been permitted, to comfort and support poor Margaret. That, however, was out of the question; and when he at length lay down to rest, it was with a sad and anxious heart, in which all the bright, warm expectations of pleasure which had visited him on the preceding night, had been extinguished, like one of those fireworks which give out for a few minutes a thousand intense and brilliant

colours, and then end in an instant in smoke and darkness.

CHAPTER V.

A LADY'S MUTATIONS.

Mr. Graham had passed a tolerable night: heavy fits of sleep had fallen upon him from time to time, which alarmed his daughter greatly, for she did not distinguish—indeed, how could she?—between natural though very profound slumber, and the state of stupor in which she had first seen him after her return. However, the old surgeon, who, having got a diploma from some college or another, had dubbed himself doctor, watched by his patient throughout the livelong night, marking every turn with the most scrupulous care. Indeed, he was a very skilful man, as the old school of surgery went, and besides that, Dr. Kenmore had an advantage over any surgeon that could have been sent for in the case of Mr. Graham—he was his old personal friend, and he loved him dearly. Circumstances had changed with Mr. Graham since first the doctor knew him, but no alteration had taken place in their demeanour to each other. It was always "Kenmore" and "Graham" with them. The latter had fine houses, broad lands, great wealth, important speculations, wore frock coats and trousers, and drove a phaeton; the other remained in a blue coat with brass buttons, a white waistcoat, and black breeches and silk stockings, and drove the same buggy, though the horse had been changed more than once; for he, too, had a thriving

practice, and was well to do in the world. But Mr. Graham was not at all ashamed of his old companion, though the style of his dress dated thirty years before, and his manners were frank even to abruptness. Their heads had grown white together, and Kenmore was dear to Graham, but not more dear than Graham to Kenmore. If it had been a brother, or a father, or a child, the good doctor could not have been more anxious than while, sitting by the side of his patient's bed, he watched him by the shaded light, and ever and anon turned his eyes to Margaret, who, till three o'clock, was the companion of his guard.

"There, don't cry, my dear," he said, in a low voice, once, when he saw the tears in her eyes; "you'll make me more nervous than I am; if it were not that I saw you sitting wiping your eyes there, I should have devilish little anxiety at all, for I tell you it is a very good case, and we shall get him quite safely through. I wish you would go to bed, with all my heart; you are of no manner of good, I can tell you; so if you are flattering yourself that you are doing service, you are very much mistaken."

In the meantime, Mrs. Graham had long retired to rest; not that she did not love her husband as much as she could love anything—for she had gradually acquired a certain sort of affection for him, and indeed it was hardly possible for her to be without it,—but she did not see what good she could do; her own delicate health was a fair pretext; and after asking Dr. Kenmore if she could be of use, and having been bluntly told, "quite the contrary," she went to bed, and slept. She had reasons for sleeping well. She was very well contented with everything that had happened for the last week except Mr. Graham's illness. She was well contented that her daughter

should not be Lady Green—it was such a vulgar name, Green. Any one could discover in a moment that Lady Green must be at the best a baronet's wife —she might be a knight's. But Lady Fairfax: that was a different matter; it had an old, rebellious, aristocratical sound about it which she liked. Then again, Sir Arthur looked like a monkey new breeched —a chimpanzee baronet—a representative ape; she began to think him odious when compared with Allan Fairfax; she fancied that all his disagreeable qualities had made themselves apparent during the last six or seven days, and she went to sleep murmuring, "Lady Fairfax."

A sad mortification awaited Mrs. Graham, however. On the following morning, when the maid opened the curtains, her first question was, of course, for her husband. The woman informed her that he had fallen into a nice quiet sleep, and the doctor, who had lain down on the sofa, said that he was on no account to be disturbed. Mrs. Graham then asked for her letters, which she usually read in bed. Two were then given her, the first of which she read without any emotion, for it was only from a dear friend. The second, however, caused great agitation in Mrs. Graham's whole frame; but it is as well to let the reader see a part of the contents.

"I can tell you all about him, my dear Mrs. Graham," said Lady Adeliza Newsmonger; "we are all profoundly interested in him, and many a heart is breaking for him. He is a lieutenant in the —— regiment, and brought up by his old uncle the admiral, who would leave him all he has, if he could, poor man; but the estates are all strictly entailed, and go with the title, you know, to the son of William Fairfax, of Ichstead—a poor, humpbacked young man,

who married Maria Graves. But the most interesting and curious part of the whole history is, how he came to be brought up by his uncle instead of by his own father. John Fairfax, his father, was a very rising sort of man, and made a great deal of money in a short time in India. When he came back, he went into parliament, and married a Miss Allen—I don't know who she was, but I think Dulwich College belonged to her father. There was not a cleverer man in the House than John Fairfax, and he plagued the ministers terribly; but one day, when he was out hunting, just about the time this boy was born, his horse threw him, and he lighted on his head. At first he was thought to be dead, but he got better in a sort of way, though never altogether; for a most unaccountable notion took possession of him, that this boy was a changeling, that his own son had died while he was ill, and that they had put another in the place, not to vex him. He could never get it out of his head to the last day of his life, would not own him, and only left him fifty pounds a year, because he said it was not the lad's fault. That is the way he came to be educated by his uncle. Is it not very shocking and interesting?—all the property went to this young man's next brother, and is entailed upon the rest of them. There were four others before poor Mrs. Fairfax died, which was from grief, they say. But I must tell you of the ball at——"

Mrs. Graham did not read anything about the ball. She laid down the letter on the bed; she put her hand to her head; she had almost burst into tears. But instead of doing so, she thought it better to ring her bell for the maid who had gone to fetch the cup of chocolate, with which she usually began the day, and to dress herself immediately.

The maid waited to carry up the chocolate, however; and when she appeared in her mistress's chamber, she had two notes upon the salver—one very neat and lady-like, and one somewhat clerk-like, both taking leave and condoling; the one from Lady Jane, the other from Sir Arthur Green.

"Are they gone?" demanded Mrs. Graham, eagerly.

"Yes, ma'am," replied the maid, "they both went about five minutes ago; and the captain and Mr. Fairfax are only waiting for the chaise from Brownswick."

"Pray give my compliments to Mr. Fairfax," said Mrs. Graham, "and say that I beg he will not go till I have the pleasure of speaking with him for a moment."

It was uttered in the sweetest possible tone, and the maid thought her mistress intended to be very gracious to Mr. Fairfax, for even maids can be mistaken in their mistresses. When, however, Mrs. Graham, after keeping her young guest waiting for about half an hour, till she was in some degree dressed, appeared in the library, where the maid had found him, it was very evident to Fairfax himself, that the lady was not in the most placable humour. Her manner was cold and distant, and taking her own chair with a haughty air, she pointed to another, saying, "Pray be seated, Mr. Fairfax. I have a word or two to say to you before you go."

Fairfax looked a little confounded, but he replied, "I was about, my dear madam, to write you a few words, to express how much grieved I am at Mr. Graham's illness, and how much I sympathise with yourself and Miss Graham under this severe affliction."

"We really do not require sympathy, Mr. Fairfax," replied the lady; "and as you mention Miss Graham,

that is exactly the point to which what I have to say tends. Allow me to observe, that I find to my sorrow and regret, you have mistakenly been led into paying much greater attentions to my daughter than I was previously aware of. To prevent, then, anything like disappointment, I think it but fair and just to inform you that we have very different views for her; and I cannot but hint it may be as well for an acquaintance to cease, which I trust has not gone far enough to produce disagreeable results to any party."

Allan Fairfax was certainly very much astonished. The change in Mrs. Graham's whole demeanour was so marked and painful, so sudden, to him so unaccountable, that for an instant his thoughts became confused by the hasty effort of the mind to run over every circumstance in the past, for the purpose of finding some solution to the enigma. It was necessary, however, to answer, and he replied with a degree of causticity, which he would have avoided if he had had more time for reflection. "It is strange, my dear madam, that after having reached five-and-twenty, I should find anything to surprise a reasonable man in life. Nevertheless, your words, your changed manner, your whole demeanour, do so much surprise me, that I must inquire if Miss Graham has in any way complained, or ever thought, that I have paid her attentions disagreeable to her."

Mrs. Graham would not tell a direct lie in answer to a straightforward question, and she herself was not quite so calm as she might have been, so that she answered, "No, sir, she has not; but I have eyes and ears, and others have the same, and I really do not see what should surprise any young gentleman in your peculiar position, that the mother of a young lady, heiress to a large fortune, should object to

attentions which can result in no good, and even prohibit intercourse which may produce evil."

"It would not, madam," replied Fairfax, "if it had not been preceded by direct encouragement. We should not feel the absence of light if we had always dwelt in night. But I now begin to gain a little insight into the matter from an expression, perhaps inadvertently, used. My 'peculiar position' has, I suppose, been explained to you rather lately, whether by an idiot, who has most likely perverted the tale in telling, or not, you best know; but allow me to say, that my position, whatever it may be, was fully known to Mr. Graham; and before I say anything further on the principal point in question, I shall wait till he is well enough, as I trust he soon will be, to express his opinions."

"His opinions are, I beg to say, the same as my own," answered Mrs. Graham, with a very angry brow. "But this is all trifling. Lady Adeliza will be flattered by the appellation of idiot; and you may depend upon it, Mr. Graham will never feel disposed to oppose my views regarding my own daughter. In the meantime, as you force me to speak plainly, Mr. Fairfax, I must decline the honour of your visits altogether. I trust you may find a wealthy wife elsewhere. It must not be here."

The sting of the last words was felt to the marrow. To be thought—even to be called—a fortune-hunter, was more than he could bear; and feeling that if he replied at all, his words would be intemperate, he made Mrs. Graham a cold and formal bow, and hurried into the passage, at the door of which the chaise was standing in waiting for himself and Captain Hales. The latter kept him for two or three minutes after he had entered the vehicle, but then

jumped in; and with a sad glance towards the half-closed windows of Mr. Graham's room, Allan Fairfax was borne away from that house, never to set foot in it again while it remained in possession of the same family.

PART THE SECOND.

THE DAYS OF ADVERSITY.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BRITISH LABOURER'S REWARD.

Two years and a half had passed, and time had swallowed up many things most precious. Hope, happiness, enjoyment, energy, had fled from many, leaving disappointment, sorrow, and the apathy of despair. Spring was now in the place of autumn; but it had been hitherto a cold and dreary spring, with rain and sharp winds, and occasional snow; and the moor looked even more brown and desolate than at the close of the year. The winter had exhausted all its wrath upon it, and there seemed no prospect of revival; not a green blade of grass was to be seen springing up amongst the moss and heath, not a young rosy bud upon the bare branches of the trees—the very energies of nature seemed extinguished. Like the season was the fate of one of those persons to whom the reader was first introduced in this tale. Poor Ben Halliday trudged back over the moor, with bent head and frowning brow. His cheek was thin and pale, his eye hollow and dim; his clothes, once so neat and trim, though plain and suited to his station, were now worn, soiled, and in some parts ragged. But it was not to the neat cottage, with its pleasant little garden, where we have formerly seen him, that Ben Halliday now took his way. He passed through the little wood, indeed; he went beyond the turning which led to the spot where he had passed so many pleasant days; he gazed towards it with a sad and sinking heart; and a

murmur rose to his lips, but did not find utterance: "I ought not to grumble," he said—"I ought not to grumble. Those who should be better off are as bad as I am. God help us all! I wonder what will become of us in the end. We poor people have no business in the world, I can't help thinking. At all events, others seem to think so." And he walked on.

The next moment, coming up the road which led from the cottage to that which had been his cousin Jacob's, he saw a figure moving through the trees apparently heavy loaded, and yet it was not the figure of a labouring man. It was evening, but not dark; and as the person who approached was seen and lost every second or two, in passing along the hedge-row, there was that undefinable something in the air and walk which distinguishes the gentleman, totally independent of the clothing, which, in this case, could not be seen. But Halliday, however, passed by the end of the road before the other pedestrian reached it, and in the sort of despairing mood of the moment, he did not even turn his head to see who it was that approached. As he was walking on, however, a clear, mellow voice sounded on his ear, exclaiming, "Stop, my good fellow! Here—I want to speak to you!" And looking down the lane, he saw, at about twenty yards distance, a tall, handsome, well-dressed young man, carrying a heavy portmanteau by one of the handles.

"I'm looking for somebody," said the stranger, "to carry this thing for me a couple of miles; if you will do it, my good man, I will give you half-a-crown for your pains."

"I'd carry it ten for that sum," said Ben Halliday, with his face brightening. "That will keep my poor girl in broth for a week."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed the stranger, "why surely you are my old acquaintance, Ben Halliday! Do you not remember Mr. Fairfax?"

"Oh yes, sir, I remember you well enough," answered the labourer, mournfully; "but times are sadly changed with us down here; and I did not know whether you might remember me. I hardly remember myself as I was then."

"I know there have been sad reverses," answered Allan Fairfax; "but I did not think they had affected you, my poor fellow. I found your cottage shut up, and could not tell what to make of it; so I was going on to the village, where there is a public-house, I hear."

"Ay, sir, and a bad place it is, too," answered Ben Halliday; "not fit for such as you; if there is anything valuable in your trunk, I would advise you not to go there."

"I am afraid I must," answered his young companion, "for I do not wish to go back to Brownswick just at present."

"You know, sir, I dare say, all about Mr. Graham," said Ben, looking in Fairfax's face, and taking up the portmanteau at the same time.

"I do," answered Fairfax, gravely; "and it has been a sad welcome back to my own country, Halliday, to hear all this. We won't talk any more about it just now. Where do you live now, my good fellow?"

"Oh, just up at the village, sir," answered Halliday, "about half a mile on this side the public-house. So, by your leave, I'll just stop for a minute and tell my poor wife that I am going on with your portmantle. It will be glad news to her to hear that I have earned half-a-crown by a light job like this."

"Are you not in work, then, Halliday?" asked Allan Fairfax. "I should have thought a good fellow like you would have always got employment."

"Oh, yes, sir, I got work enough," answered the labourer; "but people don't pay as Mr. Graham did, and they can do with us just what they like, for there are too many of us."

Allan Fairfax did not ask any further question, but walked on with his companion, sometimes speaking a few words to him, sometimes in silence; for to say the truth, the young gentleman seemed somewhat moody and strange, sometimes smiling gaily at what was passing in his own thoughts, occasionally plunged into a fit of deep and gloomy meditation. At length a village spire came in sight, and immediately afterwards a group of cottages appeared at the corner of the road. They were all wretched in the extreme, mere hovels—ay, and hovels out of repair. The winter wind was kept from rushing through the broken windows by patches of paper and bundles of rags. The doors let in the rain, and the thatch protected not what it seemed to cover; the plaster was broken from the mud wall in a thousand places, and hung in loose tatters, bagging and bellying out, all over each miserable tenement. At the doors of some were seen squalid and dirty children, but half clothed even with their rags; and at another, a gaunt pig was grubbing with its snout amongst a pile of rubbish. At the entrance of one of the poorest, stopped Ben Halliday: and after gazing at it sternly for a moment, he set down the portmanteau, and looked full in Allan Fairfax's face, saying, in a low tone, "It is here I live now, sir."

If he had spoke for an hour, he could not have made a sadder comment on his changed condition;

but when he added, "I will just go and tell my wife," Fairfax answered, "No, Ben, I will come in with you."

"Oh, don't, sir," replied the labourer, "it will hurt you to see."

"It will grieve, but do me good," said Mr. Fairfax, in a firm tone. "I am an old friend, you know, Halliday. Take in the portmanteau, my good fellow."

Ben Halliday did as he was directed, and, walking slowly forward, opened the door. There was no joy to welcome him; a faint smile, indeed, lighted the features of his wife as she saw him come in; but she was busy tending her daughter, who sat in a wooden chair on the other side of a hearth nearly vacant of fire, though the thin white ashes that strewed it showed that wood had been burning there not long before. The daughter's face was pale and emaciated, with a red spot in the centre of the cheek, and limbs apparently so powerless that she did not even try to approach her father. The eldest and the youngest boy were both absent, and Fairfax afterwards found that the one was employed at low wages in a manufactory some fifty miles distant, the other gathering sticks in the neighbouring woods and fields. Poverty in the most abject form was evident amidst the once cheerful, laborious family, and the tattered shawl which Mrs. Halliday drew across her chest, when she saw a stranger follow her husband into the cottage, served to show rather than to hide the want of even necessary clothing.

To Fairfax, however, as soon as she recognised him, she was still the frank, civil countrywoman whom he had before seen, and no word of complaint passed her lips. Patient endurance was in all her

words and looks, and that one virtue—she had many besides—had been of more value to her husband than a thousand showy qualities could have been. Had she displayed all she suffered; had she made the worst of everything instead of the best; had she complained and murmured, Ben Halliday would have given way long before; but she had supported, and strengthened, and cheered him; and though she could not lessen the evils which surrounded them, or hide from him the griefs still in store, she enabled him to bear them with fortitude, if not without repining.

Ben Halliday kissed her as tenderly as ever; but one of his first thoughts was for his daughter, to whose side he advanced as soon as he entered, asking, "Well, Lucy, how are you to-night, dear?"

"I am better, father," said the girl, in a husky tone, broken by a cough; "I shall be quite well when the summer comes, and I can get out to help you and mother."

"She is very bad, sir," said Mrs. Halliday, speaking to Fairfax in the plain and unreserved manner (which some people might think unfeeling) that is common amongst the peasantry; "she's in a decline, poor thing."

"I am sorry to see her so unwell," replied Fairfax; "but I think a little good nourishment might do her good.—Here, Halliday," he continued, taking out his purse; "I do not like the account you give me of the public-house; so I think I shall rest myself here for an hour or two, if you will let me, and then go down to Brownswick again for the night. Run up to the village, my good man, and bring me down something for supper. We'll all sup together to-night. There's a sovereign; bring down plenty of things—eggs and

some beer, and probably you can get a pound of tea, and some milk and butter.—I dare say you would like some nice tea or milk, Susan, would not you?"

"Oh, that I would," cried the poor girl, eagerly; "I'm sure tea and milk would do me a great deal of good."

"I'll run up myself, sir," said Mrs. Halliday; "Ben is not good at marketing. I'll borrow a basket, and go in a minute."

Fairfax gave her the sovereign, adding, in a low voice, "Bring anything you think will do her good, Mrs. Halliday."

But Ben heard him, and said, "God bless you, sir!" with a tear in his eye.

Mrs. Halliday was hardly out of the door, when their cousin Jacob entered, gaunt as a wolf, with his coal-black hair floating wild and tangled about his haggard face.

"Well, Ben," he said at once, "have you been to old Stumps? I saw you come back,—did you go?"

"Yes, I went, Jacob," replied Halliday, with a sigh; "but it is no good. I told him I and Bella and the two children could not live upon seven shillings a week do what we would; and he said he could not help it. If we did not like it, we might leave, for he would give no more. He said, too, that many a man is glad to get it (which is true enough), so why should he give more to me?"

"Hell seize him!" cried Jacob Halliday, vehemently. "Who first brought down the wages here? But what did you answer, Ben?"

"I said that I must see if I could not get some help from the parish," replied his cousin; "but then he got very high and mighty, and said that I should not have one penny of outdoor relief; that I was an

able-bodied labourer at full wages, and in employ; and it was contrary to the rules of the New Law. He made me a little angry, he did; and so I said, then I must come into the Union, for it was earthly impossible for a man and his wife, and two children unable to earn a penny, to live upon seven shillings a week and pay a shilling a week rent. But that would not do either; for he answered with a sort of laugh, 'You may come in if you like, but I'll answer for it you'll soon be out again, Master Ben. We take care to make it uncomfortable enough, in order to keep all lazy fellows out, and the first thing we'll do with you is to part you and your wife and children.' He knew he had me there, Jacob; and he is one of the guardians, you know."

"Ay, I know," answered Jacob Halliday, with a bitter curse; "they've given the sheep to be taken care of by the wolf in their New Law, that's what they've done; but they may find sheep, even, sometimes turn wolves, too, and that overdriven oxen will toss. But I've something to tell you, Ben, that may mend matters with you a bit, though 'tis a bad way of mending them, too."

"What's that?" asked his cousin, eagerly; "it must be bad, indeed, that I would not snap at."

"I would not at this if it were twice as much," said Jacob; "but, however, every man to his own thinking. You know old Grimly, who had the care of Tommy Hicks, is going into the Union house on account of his bad leg, and as his wife is dead there is no one to take charge of the idiot; so Mr. Golightly, who has the paying of the money weekly, came up to me to ask if I and my wife would do it. It's five shillings a week, and he's often absent wandering about for days at a time; but Mr. Golightly

wants to keep him as far away from Brownswick as he can, for he's troublesome. I told him that if I were to take it I should for certain break his neck before a week were over, but that you were a quieter sort of man, and might like it."

The proposal threw Halliday into a fit of deep thought. "Like it I don't," he answered; "like it I don't; but five shillings a week—that's a good sum. Where could I put him?"

"Why, there's that shed place at the back," said Jacob Halliday; "if you could get some timber, it would be easy made into a tidier room than he's ever had at Grimly's. I'll lend you a hand at nights, Ben, and they say the boy is quieter a bit now—dogged, but not so spiteful. Then he has got his own bed and clothes."

"But the timber," said Ben Halliday, "how am I to buy timber? Why, it would cost fifteen shillings what with boards and nails."

"Do not let that stand in the way, Halliday," said Fairfax, who had been talking to the sick girl. "I'm poor enough, Heaven knows; but you shall have the timber, my good fellow, for old acquaintance' sake."

The poor man was very grateful; and though he made some scruple, yet the temptation of the five shillings a week was too great to be resisted by his poverty, and it was agreed that he was to go down to Brownswick on the following evening and close with Mr. Golightly's proposal.

About an hour passed before Mrs. Halliday returned, and when she came back, Jacob had gone; but her husband at once told her what had been offered, and his determination to accept it. The worthy woman was evidently ill at ease under the idea of

having the idiot an inmate of her dwelling, even poor as they were; but the thought of the money affording some relief to her husband, reconciled her to it at last, and with quick and busy hands she prepared the meal which the bounty of Fairfax had supplied. The little boy Charley had by this time returned with a load of dry wood, and a degree of cheerfulness spread through the desolate cottage which it had never before known. The tea seemed to warm and revive the poor sick girl, and Ben Halliday himself felt comforted, less by the food, perhaps, than by the knowledge that there was still one on earth who showed him kindness and sympathy.

Fairfax himself ate and drank to encourage the others to do so; but still it was little that he took, and indeed he seemed thoughtful and uneasy. Sometimes he talked a good deal to the cottagers, told them he had been in India since last he saw them, and amused the little boy by a tale of a tiger hunt, and showed him some scars upon his hand where the beast had torn him in its last agony. He reverted, unwillingly it appeared, to his former visit to Mr. Graham's house at Allerdale, and the very mention of the family threw him instantly into a deep reverie. At length, towards nine o'clock, he rose, saying, "Now, Ben, I will walk back to Brownswick. I will leave my portmanteau here for the night, merely taking out what I want, and will send up for it to-morrow."

Ben Halliday offered to carry it down that very night, but Fairfax would not suffer him to quit his family after the long and ill-repaid labours of the day, and opening the portmanteau he disposed of some necessary articles about him, and prepared to go.

"Here is the change, sir," said Mrs. Halliday, taking up a number of shillings and sixpences which she had laid down, at her return, on one corner of the table.

"No, no," answered Fairfax; "keep it to get Susan some milk or broth every day; and I had nearly forgotten the money for the timber, Halliday. You said fifteen shillings would do?"

At the same time he took out his purse, and though there was both gold and silver in it, Ben Halliday saw that it was very meagre. "I really do not like, sir," said the poor man; "I dare say I can manage somehow."

"Not a word, Halliday," replied Fairfax; "there is the amount. It was a bargain, you know, that you should take it. Good night to you all. I shall see you again before I leave this part of the country;" and with thanks and blessings he departed.

"Don't you think Mr. Fairfax very dull and sad, Ben?" asked his wife when their visitor had departed. "Every now and then he seemed to mope sadly."

"I'll tell you what it is, Bella," replied her husband; "I know as well as if I could see it all; he's sad about Mr. Graham and Miss Margaret, and well he may be. He would fain help them too if he could; but it is clear he is not rich, and though he can help such as us, he can't help such as them, and every now and then he goes casting about in his head how to do it, and does not find a way anyhow. That is it, I am sure; because he would not talk of them at all."

But it is time to turn, and explain many circumstances that were in Ben Halliday's mind at that moment.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RUIN AND THE SACRIFICE.

When Allan Fairfax quitted Allerdale House two years and a half before, Mr. Graham lay upon a bed of sickness. The attack had been sudden and unexpected, for he was a man temperate in all his habits, placid and equable in disposition, of a strong and healthy constitution, and showing no tendency to the disease which had assailed him. But his illness was not without a cause. Some slight anxiety had induced him on the day of the expedition to Brugh to go at an earlier hour than usual to Brownswick, and allow his guests to proceed without him upon an excursion which he would have willingly shared. The anxiety was, as I have said, slight, very slight. He had written about a week before to a great merchant in Liverpool whom he had aided in an extensive speculation, and, in fact, befriended through life, for some information regarding the result of the operation of which he, Mr. Graham, had furnished about one-third of the funds, and he had received no answer to his letter. The sum at stake was about fifty thousand pounds, but to a man of Mr. Graham's wealth it was not sufficient to cause any great uneasiness. Nevertheless, he was a man of business, and he was not satisfied. He therefore set out for Brownswick to see the letters at the bank, and take whatever steps might be necessary, rather than enjoy a ride with his daughter and his friends. The first news that met him was that Messrs. —— and Co.

had failed, already gathered from the newspapers by his chief clerk. "There must be considerable assets," thought Mr. Graham, "and I am very sorry for them. If they had dealt more frankly, and told me the difficulty, perhaps I might have been able to avert so unfortunate a result."

He was turning over his letters while these ideas passed through his mind, and at length he fixed upon one the handwriting of which he knew, and opened it. As he read his brow grew dark; and well it might do so, for he found that there would not be paid a shilling in the pound; that the man in whose honour he had trusted had been actually insolvent at the time when the money was advanced, and had borrowed it merely to retrieve, if possible, his fallen fortunes, by risking another's means in a rash speculation.

"This is gambling," said Mr. Graham, "and gambling with other people's money. It is dishonourable—it is ungrateful." He felt the ingratitude more than all. It was, indeed, the first considerable sum he had ever lost, and it mortified him the more because it was the first; but the ingratitude of a man whom he had so often served and assisted, his want of confidence and frankness, inflicted a severe pang upon him, and he brooded over it during the whole day. "The money," he said to his head clerk, in directing him to answer the latter, "is a trifle compared with the insincerity and the want of good faith. Pray make them feel that I am less pained at the loss than at the deceit and ingratitude of the conduct pursued towards me."

Nevertheless, he pursued his usual habits for several hours, read the rest of his letters, answered many of them with his own hand, looked at various

accounts, and prepared to return home, when the result of all was, as we have already seen, a terrific apoplectic stroke. His good constitution came to the aid of his friend the surgeon, and he recovered from the fit of apoplexy which had seized him. but not entirely. Mr. Graham was never the same man as before. He had a numbness of the right arm and leg, the clear manly enunciation was gone, he tripped over small obstructions in his way, and his mind was not so clear and firm. It was the same with his fortunes as with his health. That day was the turning point of his fate; that blow he never wholly recovered. The conduct of his affairs was feeble and uncertain; neglected during six weeks of sickness, they became complicated, and small obstructions proved too much for him. Besides, the failure of the house in which he had trusted so fully, entailed the failure of several others with which he was connected. Other speculations turned out unfortunate; there were two runs upon the bank in one month; he was obliged to realise at a great loss; the jealous and the envious began to triumph and to decry. But why need I pursue all the painful details? In one short year, which, let it be remarked, was a year of crisis and of panic, Mr. Graham was a ruined man. Amidst all that he lost there was one thing Graham did not lose—his honour, and his sense of right and justice. He did not, when he found fortune unfavourable, and one thing failing after another, either discharge servants or change his style of living, for he believed that to do so would only injure his credit and render recovery hopeless; but he kept his eye always vigilantly upon his accounts, and when he found that nothing was left but barely sufficient to pay all he owed and leave a mere competence for

himself and his family, he announced his intention of stopping payment the next day. The same night, his head clerk absconded with ten thousand pounds. Mr. Graham was a bankrupt; but still his property paid twenty shillings in the pound, and left over and above, for himself and daughter, the sum of thirty pounds per annum, an old annuity which he had bought up, and, in ready money, one hundred pounds. Strange to say, this sad reverse affected his health much less than might have been anticipated. It was Mrs. Graham who suffered. She had many acquaintances who had flattered her prosperity; but her haughty assumption had not left her one friend to console or assist in adversity Every neighbour triumphed in her fall; those whom she had mortified now sought and found many an occasion to mortify her in return. Mrs. Graham could not brook adversity, and she died within three months after the failure of her husband's bank.

When the announcement was made that the bank would stop payment next day, Mr. Graham had calculated that after paying all, six hundred per annum would be left to him, and the robbery of his clerk did not of course amount to a deprivation of the whole of that sum. But the most moderate men will in some degree overrate the value of their own possessions, and Mr. Graham had done so. Besides, expenses were incurred to a greater extent than he had expected, so that the result was, as I have said, beggary, or something very like it. When he gave up his property, he had taken a small and comfortable house in Brownswick, but when he discovered how much he had over-estimated his resources, that house was far too expensive for him, and he removed to a little cottage belonging to good Doctor Kenmore,

at the village of Allenchurch, which his friend put at his disposal, furnished as it was. But the stunning effect began to work, and one morning all power left the side which had been previously affected. In this state he still continued, with his general bodily health good, but no capability of moving, except with the assistance of his daughter, from his bed to his chair by the fire-side, and with his mental faculties, especially his memory, sadly impaired. It was not, indeed, that the powers of thought and reason were gone; they were only inert, and from time to time, by a great effort, he could rouse himself to argue or to judge as sanely as ever. As very often happens, too, the qualities of the heart seemed to have become more keen and sensible, as the powers of mind and body had decayed. Affection, friendship, compassion of others, sympathy with suffering, were all more easily and yet more deeply excited than in former years, when reason was strong and active to guide and control them. But there is another, of whom we have as yet said little in her day of adversity, and to her we must now turn.

Margaret Graham had in no degree given way under the evils which blasted her own prospects in life, ruined her father's fortune and health, and deprived her of her mother. The high qualities of her mind and heart seemed but to rise in energy as opportunity was afforded for their exertion. Not a murmur escaped her lips, and although the first shock was terrible, yet it was for her father she felt, not for herself. If she wept, it was in her own chamber. None saw a tear in her eyes, or its trace upon her cheek. She was as cheerful in the small house at Brownswick as she had been in the mansion by the lake, and in the cottage at Allenchurch she

was cheerful still. She had tended her mother through the short illness which ended in Mrs. Graham's death, with unremitting care; she bore the peevishness and complaints of a proud, irritable, and disappointed woman in the hours of sickness and despair, with unfailing meekness and patience, and now she was the guardian angel of her father's declining life. She sat by him, she read to him, she watched him, and in every interval she laboured eagerly to turn those accomplishments which he had bestowed upon her youth to some account for the purpose of supporting his old age. She felt grateful to God that instruction had been afforded to her early, and that she had not neglected the opportunity. Yet it was difficult to render her talents available. Lessons she could not give, so that her knowledge of music was of no service. She could not leave Mr. Graham alone during the whole day, while she was teaching, with an inexperienced servant girl of fifteen, the only person to attend him. But she drew and painted in water-colours very beautifully, and she passed a great part of each day in painting landscapes, which she sent into the town for sale. The sum that she obtained for each was a mere trifle, and after a while she devised the means of rendering her skill more profitable. Few people in Brownswick had taste to appreciate the productions of her pencil, or inclination to buy a mere drawing. But multitudes were fond of painted baskets, and boxes, and bags, and not half the time was required by her ready fingers to complete a dozen of them which she would have expended on a finished drawing. Nevertheless, the resource was a very poor one; it enabled her to supply a few comforts for her father; but that was all. By the end of the first year after

the bankruptcy, the hundred pounds which remained, after the payment in full of all claims, was nearly expended, and nothing was left but the small annuity of thirty pounds. Margaret saw that another step must be taken in the descent—that the servant girl must be discharged, that she must do all and every-thing herself; but still Margaret Graham did not murmur. Her great difficulty was, how she should speak to her father upon such a step. She knew it would cause him a deep and terrible pang, not for his own sake so much as for hers, and she shrank from the task. Even when it was accomplished, she thought their situation would be terrible, with nothing but thirty pounds each year to supply her own wants and the still greater ones of her father. If by her own exertions she could add twenty pounds each year to that sum, it was as much as she could do, and perhaps more. The first step, however, must be to discharge the servant, and she determined to ask their good old friend Doctor Kenmore, who came to see Mr. Graham almost every day, to break the necessity to him. She took an opportunity of speaking to the worthy old man when he appeared one morning earlier than usual, and before her father was up. She laid before him a complete view of the case, and the worthy doctor was moved almost to tears.

"You are an angel, Margaret," he said, looking in her face—"you are an angel; that's clear to me; and I will tell you what we must do, my dear; we must cheat your poor father. Now, don't look surprised, for the matter is only this. It was with the greatest difficulty in the world I got Graham to accept the loan of this cottage and furniture. He never would be beholden to any man for a penny in his life, even

when he was a lad; and when I spoke to him the other day about helping him a little, he got so excited, that I thought he would have done himself harm. Now, Margaret, I have neither wife nor child, kith nor kin, and am well to do in the world. I don't spend one-half of what I have got; and you must just let me make up your little income to one hundred a year, and not say a word to your father about it."

The beautiful face of Margaret Graham deepened greatly in colour; but she laid her hand kindly and tenderly on that of the good old man, while she answered, "I cannot; I must not; I never deceived my father in anything. I promised him solemnly never to have any concealment from him, and I dare not break my word. I would do anything, my dear good friend, to obtain comforts and necessaries for him; I would work all day at teaching; I would go out as a governess, only that he cannot spare me; I would do anything except deceive him, but that I cannot do, even in such a matter as this."

"Well, Margaret, well," said the old doctor, with a rueful shake of his head, "you are as bad as your father. I will talk to him, and see what impression I can make upon him. He is my earliest, my best, and dearest friend: we were boys at school together; and I am sure, if at any time I had wanted a thousand pounds, he would have given it to me without a thought. I will see what can be done with him; but you must not discharge the lass before we have spoken further."

To this condition Margaret willingly consented; but unhappily all the skill and friendly zeal of Dr. Kenmore were exerted upon Mr. Graham in vain. He said he would not live upon charity, or spunge upon friendship.

If he required anything further than his limited means allowed, he would demand it of the parish, where he had a right to apply; and he added much more in the same strain, in which early habits of thought were seen, only rendered more keen and vehement by age and infirmity. There are certain maladies, which, as is well known, render the patient obstinate and pertinacious to an exceeding degree, and such is, I believe, usually the case in affections of the brain similar to that under which Mr. Graham was suffering. Argument on a subject in regard to which he had long before made up his mind, only irritated him, and rendered him more attached to his own opinion, so that Doctor Kenmore was obliged to give the matter up in despair, only beseeching Margaret to keep the servant on till the cold weather was past. He himself, in the meantime, was more frequently than ever at the cottage, and Margaret had often the pleasure of seeing some dish upon the table which she had not ordered, some little addition to their comfort which she herself would not have ventured to think of. Now it was a large salmon, now some fine trout, now game, now the Christmas turkey and chine. She divined easily where all these presents came from, but she took care to ask no questions, as they were sent to her father, not herself, and Mr. Graham, in his feeble state, did not remark the fact, or compare very nicely his own means and the expense which such delicacies would imply. But Margaret remarked also that various articles of consumption which might be classed under the head of necessaries, lasted amazingly long. It was wonderful to what an extent a ton of coals would protract themselves, and with lights it was the same. She saw through the friendly fraud, and was some-

what uneasy; but what could she do? Old Doctor Kenmore seemed utterly unconscious; he came and went every day, and sometimes twice, but he never spoke of coals or candles, or anything of the kind. One day, on the 25th of March, he seemed a little uneasy when Mr. Graham directed his daughter to write to Sheffield for the usual certificate of the existence of the person on whose life his little annuity was granted; but he replied,—

"Let me write for it, Graham. Margaret has plenty else to do."

A terrible doubt instantly took possession of Margaret's mind, and her face turned very pale; but she dared ask no question at the time, and her father readily consented to his friend's proposal. The life on which the annuity was secured was better than her father's by twenty years; but yet there was something odd in Dr. Kenmore's manner, and it seemed certain to Margaret that their last prop was struck from under them. It was three days after that when she first had an opportunity of speaking to the old surgeon alone, but then she seized it immediately. Uncertainty, she thought, was worse than any reality, and, stopping their kind friend as he was hurrying away through the little garden, she said,—

"Stay, stay a moment. There is one question I have to ask you, dear doctor. What made you so anxious to write about the annuity?"

"Because I thought I could manage matters of business better than a girl," replied Dr. Kenmore, abruptly, and was again hurrying away.

Margaret detained him, however, laying her hand upon his arm, and saying,—

"One question more; I must know the truth,—is Mr. Jones dead?"

The old man turned towards her, and gazed in her face with a look of solemn earnestness, and then took her hand in his.

"Margaret," he said, after a pause, "will you be my wife?—I say, will you be my wife?—for, on my soul, that is the only way I see of helping you and your father."

Margaret's surprise was very great. Such an idea had never crossed her mind—the possibility of such a thing had never struck her. But then came crowding upon her mind all the particulars of her father's situation; his and her utter destitution; his broken health; his hopeless prospects; his need of care and constant watchfulness; the utter impossibility of her supporting him without leaving him; his desolation and wretchedness if she did—all, all came rushing upon her like a torrent, carrying away every obstacle, every repugnance. One moment of terrible struggle took place within her; and then, gazing in the old man's face, seriously and sadly, she asked,—

"Are you serious?"

"Yes, Margaret, I am," he answered, in a tone as grave as her own; "there is but a choice of evils, my dear young lady. I have done what I could; I have been anxious to do more, but I have been prevented, as you know. I have turned the matter over and over again in my own mind, and I see nothing on earth that I can propose but this. It is hard upon you, Margaret, I know; but as my wife you will have a home for your father, with every sort of comfort which you could desire and which his situation needs. Neither will it be as if he went to the house of a stranger. He will sit down for the rest of his life by the fireside of his earliest friend. Consider of it, Margaret, my dear. I do not ask you to decide

hastily, for I am only moved by one feeling in all this: affection and friendship for you and him. Consider of it."

"No," said Margaret, warmly, taking his hand in hers, "I will not consider of it. I say yes at once, with deep and heartfelt gratitude for all your kindness, and I will try to the very best of my power to repay it to the utmost."

The old surgeon pressed her hand, saying, "I know you, Margaret, I know you well; and although there is not another woman in England whom I would ask to be an old man's wife, yet I am sure you will love me as much as you can, and will leave nothing on earth undone to make my last years comfortable and happy. Of my own fate I have no fear; and in regard to yours, I will try hard to make you banish all regret. Now I had better go and tell your father."

"No," said Margaret Graham, "no; I will tell him myself; for he may ask questions which no one but myself can answer, and it is better that it should be all done at once."

She paused a moment, and then added, "I will tell him that you offer me as much happiness as I believe it is possible for me to know in life."

"You are a good girl, Margaret," said the old surgeon, with an almost sorrowful shake of the head; "you are a dear, good girl."

"And you are the best and kindest of men," answered Margaret, with tears in her eyes; and turning away, she left him, and went into the room where her father sat.

"You have been talking a long time in the garden with Kenmore, my love," said Mr. Graham; "now, remember, Margaret, I will have no borrowing money

that we cannot pay; I would rather go into the workhouse than do that."

"We have not been talking about that at all, my dear father," said Margaret, in a cheerful tone—a very cheerful tone. "He has just been proposing to me that which makes me as happy as anything within the bounds of probability could, I believe, make me. He has been proposing that I should marry him."

"You, Margaret!" exclaimed Mr. Graham. "You marry Kenmore! Why, he is two years older than I am."

"I do not think that matters," answered Margaret; "and of one thing I am very sure, that amongst all the younger men who were once our acquaintance, and have now forgotten us, I should not find one more generous, good, and kind. Besides, these things depend a good deal upon taste, and I am quite certain, my dear father, that, take the country for forty miles round, there is no one I should prefer to himself."

"Indeed, indeed!" said Mr. Graham; "well, my love, well; but I did think——. However, I will not try to control you. You always judge right, my Margaret; but you must let me live near you. I must see you every day."

"And all day long, my dear father," answered Margaret Graham. "I would not have consented to enter any house of which you were not to be an inhabitant; but Dr. Kenmore thought of that himself, as he does, indeed, of everything that can make us comfortable."

"Well, it is very strange," said Mr. Graham, and fell into a deep fit of thought.

Cheerful smiles are very often paid for by bitter

tears, and it was so in some degree with Margaret Graham. When she had retired to rest, and her door was locked, she wept for more than an hour; but the next morning she rose again, apparently as cheerful as ever. But scenes are coming on, the details of which we must dwell upon somewhat more minutely.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INAUSPICIOUS MARRIAGE.

The matter of the marriage was talked over between Mr. Graham and his old friend; but Doctor Kenmore saw clearly that Margaret knew best how to reconcile her father to an arrangement by no means consonant to his own views, and he therefore followed as she led. The worthy doctor, too, became smarter in his appearance. He had his long gray hair cut by the most fashionable barber in Brownswick. He no longer affected the modes of thirty years before, but came out in a bran new suit of black, with trousers upon his legs; but his buckles—the beloved buckles in his shoes, which had belonged to his father, perhaps his grandfather—those he would not part with. His house was hastily put in order; and all the people of Brownswick began to ask, "What is going to happen to Doctor Kenmore?" It was soon buzzed about that he was going to marry Miss Graham; and some laughed; and some said, "Poor thing;" and some declared that they detested mercenary matches; but all agreed in the story that it was to take place immediately, and on this point they were right. Margaret

did not seek for any delay; her mind was made up, her fate was sealed, and she thought it would be wrong and insulting to a benefactor to show the slightest appearance of reluctance.

March had passed away into April; the marriage was to take place in a week; and Doctor Kenmore had just left Mr. Graham and his daughter, when a note was brought up to Margaret in her room, with information that the messenger waited for an answer. She did not know the hand, but she opened it hastily. It contained the following words, and was dated from the "White Lion," the great inn at Brownswick:—

"Dear Miss Graham," the writer said, "I have just come back from India, in which distant land I was ordered to join my regiment immediately after I last saw you. On my return, I found much melancholy intelligence awaiting me; but my first journey has been to Cumberland, where clearer tidings of all that has befallen you and yours reached me last night. I know that Mr. Graham is ill, and does not receive any visitors, but allow me to plead the privilege of an old friend, and beg of you to let me have the pleasure of seeing you for a few minutes, even if your excellent father is himself too unwell to give me admission. I would not venture to come in person without asking your permission, but I do trust and hope that you have not yet entirely forgotten

"Yours faithfully and ever,

"ALLAN FAIRFAX."

Margaret laid down the note upon the table, and trembled violently. "Yours faithfully and ever," she repeated, in a low, sad tone; but the very next instant she added—

"This is weak, this is wrong;" and opening her writing-desk, she sat down to answer the letter. For a moment, she felt sick and giddy; the paper seemed to move to and fro under her eyes; her hand would hardly hold the pen; but Margaret had learned the hard lesson of making the high purpose of the soul command the thoughts of the mind, and support the body in its weakness; and, after a struggle, she wrote words that almost broke her heart to trace.

"My dear sir," she said, "we have not forgotten you, believe me; and under any other circumstances, I should be extremely happy to see you, and thank you for your kind interest. My father is somewhat better in health than he was; but still our situation is such that I must, with great regret, decline the pleasure of your visit. At some future time I trust I shall be better able than now to express the thanks of

"Your old acquaintance,

"MARGARET GRAHAM."

She would not read it over when she had written it, but sealed it hastily, and calling the maid, directed her to give it to the messenger. When that was done, and she was alone, she sat and gazed at the paper which bore the handwriting of Fairfax, and it was several minutes before she moved. She then only uttered the words "madness and folly!" and taking up the note, she put it in the fire. It burned slowly away, a small spark lingered and wandered here and there, and then went out, leaving all black.

"Such has been my fate!" said Margaret to herself; "I will think of it no more—no, no, not for a moment."

During the evening she was very grave, but the

next morning she resumed her ordinary demeanour, and nothing occurred for two days that could shake it. Then, indeed, old Dr. Kenmore told her, in an ordinary tone, that in going his usual round of visits, he had seen a young gentleman whom he recollected having once met in the grounds at Allerdale with Mr. Graham.

"I have not told your father, my dear," he continued, "because I thought it might vex him to hear that lad was wandering about down here, without ever trying to see his old friend."

Margaret was agitated; but she would not hear a charge against Allan Fairfax unrefuted, and she replied,—

"No, my dear doctor, he did try to see my father. He wrote a note to me expressing a wish to come, but I declined; as, indeed, I have done with every one."

"You did right, Margaret," replied Doctor Kenmore; "Graham should be kept free from all agitation that can be avoided, and the very name of Allerdale moves him a good deal still."

There ended the conversation; and the wedding-day came rapidly. I will not attempt to pry into the secrets of Margaret's heart; I will not inquire what the passing moments brought to her; I will not dwell upon the thoughts of the day or of the night, as one after the other went by, hurrying on the moment of her fate. She grew somewhat pale and thin in that last week; but she gave no one cause to say that she seemed melancholy. A little graver than usual she might be; but what woman can prepare to change the whole relations of her life, to enter upon a new and all-important task, and not be thoughtful? In all else but that light shade of meditation, her de-

meanour was to every eye the same as usual. She smiled sweetly upon her father, kindly upon the good old surgeon, was pleased with all he did to please her, and approved and confirmed all the arrangements he had made. She preferred only one request, that the marriage might be as private as possible, and to that Doctor Kenmore readily agreed.

"We will have nobody there, Margaret, but our ownselves and the lawyer, and your old acquaintance, Miss Harding. The people who came would only very mistakenly call us two fools—me an old one and you a young one; but we will not mind what they say—a nine days' wonder never lasts ten."

Mr. Graham did not meet matters quite so calmly as his daughter. He seemed ill at ease, and often sighed heavily; and though Margaret, whenever she saw his spirits depressed, talked cheerfully of coming years, yet it seemed to have little effect. He had watched her mind and character from the cradle; and, perhaps, even though stricken with severe infirmity, and enfeebled in body and mind, the parent's eye saw the daughter's heart.

His corporeal health, however, did not seem to suffer; on the contrary, leaning on Margaret's arm, he walked slowly out into the garden. He went the next day in his good old friend's little phaeton, to see the room prepared for him at Dr. Kenmore's house, and he showed himself pleased with all the arrangements made for his comfort, and still more with the attention paid to Margaret's tastes and habits. He approved, too, of the plan which Margaret proposed—namely, that after the ceremony, he should remain for the rest of the day at the cottage, while she went to take possession of her new dwelling, and that early the next morning the doctor's phaeton should come

to bring him to Brownswick. Margaret took care that an old and faithful servant of her future husband should be ordered to stay at the cottage to watch and assist him during that day; and he seemed so well that she had no fears.

The day preceding the marriage was a busy one for Dr. Kenmore; he had a thousand things to do besides seeing all his most important patients. The good doctor himself was fatigued, though he was a hale, active little man, and his handsome, short-legged cob was completely knocked up. But that day went by, and the sun rose upon another.

The little church of Allenchurch was, luckily, some way out of the village; there was no crowd, no gazers, and Margaret Graham stood before the altar with her father's old schoolfellow. It was a fine, clear Spring day, one of the first which had visited the world that year, and Margaret Graham wanted yet three months and a day of being two-and-twenty—Doctor Kenmore was sixty-eight. She had dressed herself very plainly, and in a manner to make her look older than she was; but nothing could conceal that she was very young, and very, very beautiful. Her whole demeanour through the service was what any one who knew her well would have expected of Margaret Graham—graceful, quiet, grave; but it was very calm also. The trial was not then—it was over.

The words were spoken, and she said "I will!" distinctly; the ring was upon her finger—she was Dr. Kenmore's wife. The curtain fell between her and the past; the prospect of the future was clear before her—clear and cold!

It was impossible for Mr. Graham to be present; the vicar of his former parish gave Margaret away, and she and her husband drove at once to the cot-

tage, where her father waited to see them, before they went to their home. They stayed with him about an hour, and then immediately turned to Brownswick. Doctor Kenmore had gone to the church in a pair of tied shoes, but as soon as he got home he resumed his large silver buckles, declaring that his feet felt cold without them.

There were a great many things to be seen to and arranged about the house, so that there was plenty of occupation till dinner-time, for the good surgeon's habits were, like his clothes, in an old fashion, and he dined at four exactly. A few minutes before that time, he pointed out to Margaret a large iron safe in his own little study, saying,—

"In there, my dear, are all my papers of importance, and they are valuable, for God has prospered my handiwork, and there are several mortgages and deeds; but, above all, my will, which I made a week ago, in such terms as to render it effectual if I died before or after my marriage."

Before Margaret could answer, the good doctor's footman came in to inform him that one Mr. Lifrid was there to pay his bill. The surgeon was inclined to send him away again, but the bill was a heavy one, amounting to nearly a hundred pounds. Mr. Lifrid was going away to London, and Doctor Kenmore went out to receive him. When he returned he had a roll of notes and some gold in his hand, but it was announced at the same time that dinner was upon the table, and thrusting the money into his pocket, he led his bride to the table. Hardly, however, were the soup and fish gone when the bell rang violently, and Doctor Kenmore said to the servant, in a very imperative tone,—

"I will go out to see no one; let them go to Mr.

M'Swine's; he's as good a doctor as I am, and thinks himself better."

The man returned in a moment, but his face was very grave, and he whispered a word or two in Doctor Kenmore's ear. The old surgeon's countenance fell.

"Order round the phaeton directly," he replied; and Margaret, gazing at him inquiringly, said,—

"My father?"

The old surgeon rose and took her hand, answering,—

"I will go and see him, my dear, and come back and let you know how he is going on."

But Margaret answered,—

"I must go with you;" and he made no objection.

They were both clad for going forth, and standing in the passage with the door half open, waiting for the phaeton, when a poor woman, dressed as the wife of a labourer of the lowest class, looked in, laying her hand at the same time upon the bell; but Doctor Kenmore stopped her, saying,—

"What do you want, Mrs. Halliday? I cannot see anybody to-night. I am going out. Mr. Graham has fallen down in another fit."

"Ah, poor gentleman!" said Mrs. Halliday; "I don't want to stop you, sir, and indeed I have no right; but Ben is very bad, poor fellow; he came home yesterday with a stitch in his side, and to-day he cannot fetch his breath at all, and is terrible red in the face, and restless. I went over this morning to the Union to get an order for the doctor to see him—that is seven miles—and then I had to come here for Mr. M'Swine, and that is nine more, and Mr. M'Swine is out, and his shop-boy says he won't be home till ten or eleven, and poor Ben says he is sure he will die, and I am ready to drop."

"And seven miles more to walk home," said Doctor Kenmore; "I will see your husband—he is a good man—I will see him. Here, come in and take a glass of wine; Mr. M'Swine is in, but he does not choose to go," continued the surgeon, muttering to himself. "This comes of farming out the poor to the lowest contractor. I will see your husband before I sleep, Mrs. Halliday," and he poured the woman out a large glass of wine, adding, however, some water, to prevent it from getting into her head.

By the time this was all done, the phaeton was at the door, and hurrying away with his wife and the servant (not without a regret that there was no place in the small vehicle for Mrs. Halliday), the good old man drove to Allenchurch, and arrived at the door of Mr. Graham's residence just as night fell.

The door was opened as soon as the sound of wheels was heard, and Margaret ran in, inquiring eagerly for her father. The woman replied, that he seemed a little better, and she instantly hurried to his room. In the meanwhile, Doctor Kenmore had ordered the servant calmly to drive the horse back to Brownswick, but not to go to bed before twelve unless he heard from him, and having given these orders, he also entered the house, and went to the room where Mr. Graham lay. As soon as he saw him, and heard his breathing, he said,—

"Margaret, my dear, we must remain here all night; this is a case in which I cannot bleed him; for though it might produce temporary relief, it would be followed by more serious evils. We must proceed more slowly, but more safely, and I trust we shall succeed. He must be raised up, and the head sponged with cold water; bottles of hot water to the

feet directly, and if we can get some sal volatile down, so much the better."

All was done which the good old surgeon recommended; the stertorous breathing ceased in about an hour; Mr. Graham moved his right arm and put his hand to his head, and a moment or two after, opened his eyes, and looked round confusedly. The next instant he closed them again, and fell into a quiet and gentle sleep, with easy breathing, and a face, which had previously been very pale, and covered with profuse perspiration, but which now resumed its natural hue.

"Now everything must be kept quite quiet," said the good old doctor, in a whisper to Margaret; "reaction will take place in a few hours, and then he must lose a little blood, after which I trust he will be quite safe. You sit by him, my dear, till I return; for I must not forget poor Ben Halliday, and there is nothing to be done here for six hours at least."

"But you have sent away the phaeton, have you not?" asked Margaret, somewhat anxiously, and, going to the window, she looked out.

"Never mind, my dear, I will walk," said Doctor Kenmore; "it is a beautiful evening, and the quarter-moon there, just rising over the trees round the church, will light me better than the sun. I sha'n't be long, for I know what is the matter with Halliday already. He has got inflammation of the lungs, and I must bleed him largely. To-morrow it will be too late, and M'Swine would let the poor fellow die,—so good night, my dear, for the present."

Thus saying, good Doctor Kenmore departed, and Margaret sat down to watch by her father's bed-side, falling into a long, sad fit of meditation, which lasted for a considerable time. Hour after hour went by,

—eight, nine, ten o'clock came, eleven struck, twelve approached, and Doctor Kenmore did not come.

CHAPTER IX.

MEDICAL RELIEF.

It is time now to turn to the history of the persons towards whose cottage Doctor Kenmore had bent his steps; and I must take it up again at the period where I last quitted it. Allan Fairfax left the family of Ben Halliday comparatively happy. His children had had food—one sufficient meal, which was more than they had obtained for months. The sum of thirteen shillings and some pence remained; the change out of the sovereign. Think of it, reader! What does it seem to you? A trifle, not sufficient to provide the daily dinner that smokes upon your table; little more than the price of two of those bottles of wine, whereof so many are drunk in your household every week. And yet, to Ben Halliday it seemed a treasure. It would add nearly fifty per cent. to his wages for four weeks. It would keep the wolf from the door. It would give bread—bread enough; and he asked little more. The labourer—oh, the poor labourer! what a life is his, in the richest, the most industrious, the most charitable country in the world! It is not alone the hard, unremitting daily toil for bare subsistence, which makes the sadness of his lot; it is not the privation of every material comfort, of relaxation, of warmth, of sufficient nourishment, of care in sickness for himself or his children, of everything in the shape of enjoy-

ment; but it is the privation of hope and expectation —of prospect: the blighting not only of the present harvest, but of the seed for the future crop. Is this an exaggerated picture? Let those who have lived much among the lower classes, as I have, answer. What has the British labourer at any period of his course to look forward to? what are his prospects? A life of unremitting, ill-requited toil, constant necessity, without the power of providing aught for an evil day; cold in his dwelling, want at his table, sickness in the train of want, neglect in the time of sickness; age, infirmity, and death in the rigid imprisonment of the parish Union. Add to this, the sight of his children brought up to the same lot; to live, like him, without hope, and to die, like him, in beggary. Such are the prospects of the British labourer; and I defy any one to prove that they are, generally, better.

Take hope from man, and you render him a demon. We have done it; we are doing it; and we wonder that there are flaming ricks and stackyards smouldering in their ashes. Let us beware before it be too late, lest the fire extend somewhat further. It was an ancient custom in Morocco to punish criminals undergoing sentence of death by giving them small handfuls of couscousou, just sufficient to keep them alive and protract their torture; but the wise rulers of Morocco impaled them first, so that they could not spring upon their tormentors. We give our men the same diet, and leave them in nearly as much misery; but we do not secure ourselves by fixing them on a stake.

However, Ben Halliday was comparatively happy. When Allan Fairfax found him, he had not a penny or a loaf of bread in the house; he had seven shil-

lings a-week as a recompence for six days' incessant profitable labour; he had himself, his wife, a son incapable of gaining anything, and a dying daughter to support; he had been told by his master, one of the guardians, that if he applied to the Union he would not receive any relief, unless he came into the house with his wife and family; and that if he did come in, he should be separated from his wife and family, and be made so miserable that he should soon be glad to quit it again.* Such was his state when Fairfax found him; and now he had more than thirteen shillings in the house, and the prospect of obtaining five shillings a-week more, merely for the care of a mischievous idiot. It was wealth—it was prosperity—it was happiness! How the whole family blessed Allan Fairfax! He seemed like a guardian angel, come to save and to restore. The next morning, Ben was up before daylight, working away in the shed to render it fit for the reception of Tommy Hicks, and he had done all that could be done without boards and nails ere the sun rose, and his time of daily labour returned. In the evening he went to Brownswick, and concluded the whole arrangement with the person who paid for the idiot; and at night he worked away at the shed with his cousin Jacob, his wife having in the meantime procured the necessary materials. By the next morning all was ready, the place made warm and tight, and on the third day the idiot was installed, his bed and clothes moved up, and he an inmate of Ben Halliday's dwelling. They began well together. Father and mother and children did all they could to make the unhappy man comfortable, and he seemed

* This is not a fiction. The case occurred within my own knowledge; the farmer made this exact reply; the labourer had three children; the wages were seven shillings a-week; *but the county was not Cumberland.*

to like the change from old Grimly's cottage. He laughed and talked amazingly, and leered fearfully about him, and said he should be very merry there, and would show them strange tricks. There was only one matter of dispute between him and Ben Halliday. He took a particular affection for Mr. Fairfax's portmanteau, and would sit on nothing else. When it was taken from him, he turned sullen and walked out of the house, wandering about, without returning for twelve hours. He was not far distant, however; for amidst his ramblings he twice found his way to the cottage of Jacob Halliday, and seemed inclined to curry favour with his family, cutting a stick for his son Bill into various grotesque forms, in which art he was extraordinarily skilful.

I have said nothing of Fairfax's movements subsequent to the day of his return to Cumberland, except what the reader has seen in his note to Margaret; but it may be necessary to mention, that he returned once to the cottage of Ben Halliday, the day after his former visit, and took out of his portmanteau some clothes and a dressing-case, which he sent down to the inn at Brownswick by a little boy of the village. He was seen once or twice for a day or two afterwards, but then disappeared for some time.

In the meanwhile, Jacob Halliday began to regret that he had not accepted the charge of the idiot himself; for with the perversion of affection, not unfrequent in such persons, Tommy Hicks seemed to attach himself to Jacob in proportion to the dislike and threats of the other. Besides, pecuniary matters were no better with Jacob than his cousin. It is true, he had but one child; but then his wife was not as careful and as active as Ben's, and she bore her fate less meekly. Misery and wretchedness were at their

height in his cottage. There was hardly a bed to lie on, or clothes to cover its inmates, and Jacob's impatient spirit fretted under the yoke. He used rash and angry words, and at length he went down himself, and vehemently, but not without rude eloquence, represented his condition to the farmer whom he and his cousin both served.

Farmer Stumps was irritated, and threatened to dismiss him altogether if he heard any further complaints; and Jacob, after gazing at him sternly for a moment, turned upon his heel and walked away, muttering more than once as he went,—

"We must teach them better."

Two days after, his wife seemed more contented, and he himself in better spirits; and one night he brought up to his cousin's house a porringer of very excellent soup for poor Susan. The girl was delighted with it, and said it tasted better than anything she had ever eaten; and Jacob laughed, and replied that it was made of nothing but what grew in the fields. The idiot took a spoonful, and laughed aloud, answering,—

"Ay, with fur and feathers for leaves."

Jacob said nothing in return, but went away; and two days after, Tommy Hicks, after having been out till after nightfall, came back with a brace of rabbits in his hand, capering and grinning, and showing a trap of his own invention, which was quite as well adapted for snaring hares or any other animals as those which he had caught. In vain did Ben Halliday attempt to make him comprehend that he brought himself into danger by such proceedings; in vain did Mrs. Halliday refuse to roast the rabbits for him. Tommy set to work himself, and skinned and cooked them in his own peculiar fashion, devouring

them both when they were done, with all the relish that even wiser men than himself find in game of their own taking.

So far all went well enough with Ben Halliday; but three nights before the marriage-day of Margaret Graham the little boy suddenly pointed to the window about nine o'clock, and cried,—

"Look, look, dad! What a pretty colour in the sky. It seems as if morning was coming already."

Ben went to the door and gazed forth, saying,—

"It's the north-lights, I think." But the moment after, he exclaimed, "No, I do believe it is a great fire somewhere!" and, without waiting to take his hat, he ran out, and proceeded till he could see clear down over the moor. The road he took was not the same as that on which he had lately met Mr. Fairfax; for, as I think I have before explained, the moor extended far along the side of the hills, broken by patches of wood and cultivated ground; and in about five minutes he had a fair view of all the country towards Brownswick. At the bottom of the descent lay the principal farm of his present master, with its rick-yard and stacks all round it, and from that point rose the fitful blaze which illuminated the whole heaven, and showed him the lines of barn and stable, housetops and trees, at about a mile and a half distance, with the undulations of the moor in red light and shade between. Two ricks were already on fire; the wind was blowing cold and strong over the yard and the buildings, and, without waiting for further examination, Ben Halliday ran as fast as he could to give assistance. As he approached he heard loud voices and curses and threats, but there was, at the moment, a hedge of some tall trees between him and the scene of conflagration,

and he could not perceive what was going on. When he had passed that screen, however, a sight presented itself which has been seen more than once since in many counties in England. Three large ricks were now blazing; the wind was driving the sparks and lighted straws right upon the rest of the valuable produce of the last year's harvest. The farmer, his son, and some of his house-servants were labouring furiously to extinguish the flames, but only adding to their intensity, and endangering the rest of the property by throwing down the blazing corn. Around stood no less than twenty labourers from that and the neighbouring farms; but all their arms were crossed upon their chests, and not a man moved a finger to save the wealth of the hard, rich man. In vain he swore, or threatened, or entreated; no one stirred.

"You villains!" he cried, "you have set it alight yourselves, I do believe!"

"No, no, Master Stumps," answered a sturdy fellow, "that won't do. We did not light it, and we won't put it out. You don't help us, why should we help you?"

"There goes the blood and sweat of many a poor, honest man, Farmer Stumps," said another, "blazing up to Heaven to tell how you've used him."

"We should never have had a bushel of it," cried a third; "let those save it as were like to get it."

But at that moment Ben Halliday burst into the midst of them.

"For shame! for shame, men," he cried, "to stand idle there and see a neighbour's corn burn! Do you think bread would be cheaper if all the yards in the country were in a blaze?"

"No; but wages would be higher, if masters were taught not to starve their men," said a voice not far

off, and a loud laugh from several of the peasants followed.

Ben Halliday listened not to the rejoinder, but leaped over the low wall of the rick-yard, and running up to the farmer exclaimed,—

"Don't, Master Stumps; for Heaven's sake don't stir the fire that way. You've got plenty of rick-cloths; get them all out, dip them in the pond, and draw them over the nearest stacks. We've plenty of hands to do that even though those fellows won't help; ay, and to keep them wet with buckets too, till the engine comes up from Brownswick."

"That's a good thought—a devilish good thought!" cried the farmer. "You're a capital fellow, Ben. Here, help us to get down the cloths."

"Some one get the ladders!" cried the labourer, running with the farmer towards the loft over the barn where the rick-cloths were kept.

His simple suggestion soon changed the face of affairs. The heavy canvas-cloths were speedily brought forth, dragged through the neighbouring pond, and then, not without great labour and exertion, drawn over the nearest ricks. Several men were employed to keep them constantly wet; the rest to throw water over the ends of the barns nearest to the fire; and the farmer's wife, daughters, and maids, though in a strange state of confusion and agitation, were directed to watch the roof of the house, and guard against the sparks catching the woodwork.

In every effort, in every exertion, Ben Halliday bore as great a share as any one; but his example had no effect upon the other labourers, who, after seeing that the fire was likely to do no more damage, and hearing the engine coming along the road,

dropped away one by one. It is a sad thing, but it too often occurs, that he who on any occasion renders the most service to others is the one who suffers, as if a certain amount of disaster was to be inflicted, and that those who turned it aside from friend, or neighbour, or country, or society, took it upon himself. Thank God, we know that such is not the case, and that all is ordered mercifully and wisely; but yet, as I have said, so it is, the greatest benefactors are the worst requited, and generally suffer by their exertions in favour of other men.

Sad, sad philosophy! Too terrible truth!

Poor Ben Halliday laboured hard for an hour and a half amidst flame and intense heat; he was wet with the water which he brought from the pond; he was overheated with the fire and the exertion; and when all was done, and he saw that the rest of the property was safe, he turned away, hardly noticed, barely thanked, and walked musing over the moor towards his own miserable abode. The night wind blew keen and sharp; but he went slowly, for he was both weary and sad. He had much food for thought, too; for a voice had sounded in his ear which he knew well, and had raised painful doubts and suspicions. Suddenly he quickened his pace, for he felt the blast strike and chill him; and when he lay down to rest upon his hard bed with scanty covering an aguish shivering seized him. The next day he rose, feeble and feeling ill; but he went to his work as usual and returned worse. Still he would not apply to the Union for assistance—he had never received any aid from it, and he disliked the very thought; but at length the pain in his side, the difficulty of breathing, the utter prostration of strength, convinced him he was very ill—made him believe he

was dying, and he consented that his wife should go and seek the aid of the parish surgeon. It was a thing that could not be refused, but, as we have seen, to obtain it she had to walk near twenty miles, and to be absent from her family the whole day.* She did not mind the toil; she did not even care about seeing Ben Halliday written down as "pauper," so that she obtained speedy help for him; but when she got to Brownswick, and found that aid was likely to be delayed some eighteen hours longer, the poor woman's heart sunk. The Union authorities were bent upon lowering the poor's rates; it was the object of the institution—they thought it the sole object—for they very well knew, as to its improving the character of the labourer by throwing him more upon his own exertions, that was all nonsense—parliamentary-commission-report nonsense. They took care, in their individual capacity, that his own exertions should be as unfruitful as possible; the new law and the increase of population only gave them the opportunity of doing so more easily. The old law, by an easy, constitutional, and, if wisely administered, safe operation, acted as a check upon the rapacity of employers: it provided that what was not paid in wages

* The case, as it actually occurred, was as follows:—A poor woman, whose husband was seized with acute inflammation, living at S——, went thence to N—— to get an order from the overseer for medical relief, the distance there and back being five miles. She had then to carry the order to E——, five miles, but on presenting it to the medical officer at E——, he told her that her house was in a parish out of his district, and she was sent back five miles to N——. She was then sent by the overseer to the relieving officer at D——, about two miles. The officer was not at home, and she could get no aid that night, but returned to her own house, a distance of more than three miles. Medical attendance was not obtained till the middle of the next day, when she had walked eight miles in addition to the twenty she had previously journeyed.

should be paid in poor's-rates; but that law had been swept away, and the object now was to reduce the rates. They, therefore, cut down everything, and amongst the rest the allowance to medical officers. They demanded tenders; they demanded no testimony of ability, skill, kindness, conscientiousness: all they demanded was cheapness. The cheapest man in Brownswick was Mr. M'Swine, surgeon and apothecary; and he was appointed. But Mr. M'Swine had no inclination to put himself out of the way for paupers. He farmed them upon an average of twopence-halfpenny per head for medicine and attendance, and it was not to be expected that he should give them much of either. His was a true homœopathic system as to the former, and as to the latter he called on the sick poor when it was convenient. The more of them that died the better for him, provided it could not be proved that it was his fault. It is all very well to presume that men will not be scoundrels, but much better not to tempt them to be so. Mr. M'Swine was at home when Mrs. Halliday came with the order, but his shop-boy had directions what to say on such occasions, and the poor wife of as good a man as ever existed stood before his door in despair. She saw some one ring Dr. Kenmore's bell: she knew him to be a good, kind, humane man, though somewhat rough, and taking heart of grace, she went over, too, after a few minutes' thought.

The good doctor's reception of her we have already seen, and, revived by the wine he had given, she turned her steps homeward with hope refreshed. She found her husband tossing about anxiously in bed, and trying every position in order to draw his breath more easily, but in vain. The two children were close to his bedside, the sick girl at the pillow,

the boy near the foot. In the further corner of the hut sat the idiot, Tommy Hicks, on the beloved portmanteau, talking to himself in a low voice, and cutting a stick, according to custom.

Ben Halliday's first question was, "Is Mr. M'Swine coming, Bella? If he does not make haste, it will be too late."

"No, Ben, but Doctor Kenmore is," answered his wife, drawing near, and sitting down on the side of the bed; "he will be here directly, God bless him! and he gave me a glass of wine to comfort me."

"Ah, he is a good man," said Ben Halliday, "and he'll cure me, if any one can. Now run out, Charley," he continued, in a lower voice, "and see what it was Tommy Hicks put away under the thatch. He is always hiding something, like a tame raven."

The boy ran out, but the moment the idiot saw him approach the thatch, he started up to follow him. "Sit down, Tommy Hicks," exclaimed Mrs. Halliday, in an authoritative tone, fixing her eyes upon him as she spoke, and the idiot resumed his seat without a word. The little boy, Charles, returned the next minute with a table-knife which Tommy Hicks had hid under the thatch; and a candle being lighted, Mrs. Halliday prepared herself a cup of tea, as some refreshment after her long walk. About three-quarters of an hour elapsed, and Ben Halliday became anxious, with the impatience of feverish illness, for the arrival of Doctor Kenmore. The little boy was sent out to look along the road by the moonlight, and see if he was coming. Nobody was in sight, however, but their kinsman, Jacob, who was wending his way slowly towards the moor. After a few minutes' pause, the boy went out again, but this time he returned instantly, saying, 'Here he comes

—here he comes, with his stick up to his nose; I see him quite well."

The sick girl got up from the stool by her father's side to leave a place for the doctor; and as soon as his step was heard approaching, Charley Halliday opened the door. As soon as he entered, however, Tommy Hicks started up with a laugh, and thrust the stick he was cutting between the good old surgeon's legs, nearly throwing him down, and exclaiming,—

"Ride in, Doctor Kenmore."

The good man on whom he played off this trick was constitutionally somewhat irascible, and several things had occurred to vex him on a day which he had set apart as a day for happiness. Without more ado, then, he lifted his cane and struck Tommy Hicks a smart blow over the shoulders, saying,—

"I'll teach you to play me such tricks, you mischievous devil!"

With a howl of pain and rage the idiot ran out of the cottage, and Doctor Kenmore approaching Ben Halliday's bed-side, sat down, and resumed his kindly nature at once.

"Well, my poor fellow," he said; "so you have got yourself into a bad way. Inflammation of the lungs, caught helping Farmer Stumps to put out the fire."

As he spoke, he laid his hand on Halliday's pulse, and the labourer replied,—

"I don't know what it is, doctor, but I am very bad —I never was so bad as this."

"Well, you sha'n't die this time, Ben," answered Doctor Kenmore, putting his hands in his pockets; "give me a basin, Mrs. Halliday; we must have a good drop of blood, Ben;" and taking out a pocket-book and two rolls of list, he spread them out upon the bed and chose a lancet. Ben Halliday's sleeve

was then tucked up, his brawny arm extended, grasping the doctor's cane, and in a minute after the thick, dark blood was spouting forth into the basin as if it had been propelled from a syringe. Doctor Kenmore suffered it to flow for several minutes, watching the labourer's face as he did so with earnest attention; but at last Halliday spoke himself, saying, with a sort of sign of relief,—

"Oh, that is so comfortable! it seems as if some one was pouring cool water upon the hot place in my side."

"I know that," answered Doctor Kenmore; "but we must go on till you feel yourself faint,—ay, and must repeat it to-morrow; in these cases it is no use doing things by halves. Open and shut your hand on the stick, my man—do ye feel faint?"

"A little, sir, and not much," answered Ben Halliday, in a low voice; but the next moment he fell back in the bed, and Doctor Kenmore put his thumb on the vein, saying, "That is all right."

Mrs. Halliday was a little frightened; but she had great confidence in the doctor, and in a few minutes her husband was restored to consciousness, and declared that he felt comparatively quite well.

"Ay, Ben, but still you will need to be bled to-morrow again," answered Doctor Kenmore. "But we must manage the matter shrewdly, Goody Halliday. If M'Swine does not come to see him to-morrow, before twelve let me know, and if he does, tell him I said Ben was not to be bled any more, and then he is sure to bleed him."

Doctor Kenmore knew his professional brother well; and after giving a few more directions, and leaving a blister, which he had brought for Mr. Graham, to be put upon Ben Halliday's side, he bade

the grateful family farewell, and set out upon his return towards Allenchurch. He was seen by a servant of the manufacturer who had bought Mr. Graham's former house, just at the crossing of two roads. He was met by a cottager and a little boy, about a quarter of a mile on, just at the edge of the moor. These, it would appear, were the last persons but one who saw Doctor Kenmore alive.

CHAPTER X.

THE WIDOWED BRIDE.

LET us return to Margaret. By the time that eleven o'clock had arrived, she had grown somewhat anxious, but she consoled herself by thinking that poor Ben Halliday might very likely require more immediate and constant attention than her father; but when twelve o'clock came, and Dr. Kenmore neither came nor sent, she became seriously alarmed. The next question was, what she should do. Her father still slept, but there were only two maids in the house, and the nearest cottage was nearly half-a-mile distant. It was necessary to do something, however; and after revolving the matter in her own mind for some minutes, she sent the elder servant down to the Rectory House at Allenchurch, with directions to call up the clergyman, who was a very worthy man, and tell him all the circumstances.

It luckily happened that the rector was composing his sermon, and had not yet gone to bed; and putting on hat and coat, he came down instantly to Mr. Graham's, bringing his man-servant along with him. After a kindly consultation with Margaret, and en-

deavouring to allay her fears as much as possible, he sent his servant to Brownswick, in the belief that Dr. Kenmore might have returned to his own house for some medicines for the two sick men. In about an hour, however, the servant returned, with the worthy surgeon's own footman, bringing intelligence that he had not been heard of at Brownswick. The matter now became serious, for it was by this time two o'clock in the morning, and Margaret felt sure that if necessarily detained so long, Dr. Kenmore would have sent some one to inform her of the fact. Some cottagers were roused from their beds, lanterns were procured, and, headed by the rector in person, the whole party set out from Allenchurch to trace the good surgeon's course up to Ben Halliday's house. Spreading out for some way on each side of the road, they walked on, and reached the top of the hill without discovering anything of him they sought for. The good rector began to hope that they should find him at the cottage; but when they approached it, all was dark within. To make quite sure, however, they knocked, and Ben's voice was heard immediately after, saying, "There is some one knocking at the door, Bella. Get on some clothes, and see what they can want at this time of night."

"We want to know if Doctor Kenmore is here," said the rector, speaking through the door · "you need not trouble yourself to open, Mrs. Halliday; only let us know where the doctor is, if you can."

"Oh dear, sir, he has been gone from here these five or six hours," said Ben Halliday's wife. "Has he not got back yet?" and at the same time she opened the door.

"I am sorry to say he has not," answered the rector of Allenchurch.

"Then he must be at Mr. Graham's, sir," rejoined Mrs. Halliday, as if the thought struck her suddenly. "I know he was going there, for I heard him say so."

"He was expected," answered the clergyman, "but has not returned; perhaps he may have taken the short paths over the moor. We will go and see."

Now it happened that there were two roads between Allenchurch and the village at the top of the moor, by either of which a foot passenger or person on horseback might reach Ben Halliday's cottage. The public road was the easiest and best in ascending the hill, for it was not so steep as the other, which was not fitted for carriages. From habit more than aught else, the searching party had taken the broad way in ascending, but they now pursued the narrower bridle-path back towards Allenchurch. The lanes leading to the moor offered nothing to call their attention; but within five hundred yards after they began the descent, close by a spot where stood the remains of an old cottage or hut, long abandoned, they saw, by the moonlight, something dark lying on the road before them, and one of the men, running quickly forward, exclaimed, "Here he is, poor old gentleman! He's fallen down in a fit."

"Do not move him," cried the rector, who knew, from Margaret's account, that he had a large sum of money on his person when he left Allenchurch; and, hurrying forward with the lanterns, he stooped down over the body.

"Here is blood," he said, as he gazed; "this is no fit."

Doctor Kenmore was lying on his face, with his head towards Allenchurch, as if he had fallen descending the hill. His hat lay at least ten yards further on, and at first all present imagined that he had

not been moved since he fell; but a very little inspection showed them that such was not the case. The pockets of his coat were turned inside out, and so were those of his trousers; but, strange to say, his gold watch and chain, the seals appended to which were quite visible, had not been taken. Yet the silver buckles were gone out of his shoes, and the gold head had been wrenched off his cane, which lay bent underneath him. On further examination, a severe contused wound, as surgeons term it, was found on the back of the head, which had actually driven in the skull, and his face was somewhat cut by the gravel, apparently as he fell. The wound had bled a good deal, and stained the road, but no instrument which could have inflicted it was found near, unless it were a large stone, weighing fifteen or twenty pounds, which lay at the side of the path; but no hair or blood was to be found upon it. The hat, however, was dented in, and stained with a little blood in the inside, so that it had evidently been on his head when he was struck. No footmarks were found near, nor any evidence of a struggle having taken place. The crime seemed to have been suddenly perpetrated, and the murderer to have taken his victim quite by surprise.

The rector of Allenchurch made strict examination of every circumstance; and the peasants, who loved the old man, as well as his own servant, were profuse in exclamations of pity and regret. The clergyman only made one remark—that it was strange that his watch had been left; and then gave orders that the body should be removed to Brownswick, all signs of life being extinct having been found present, even to perfect rigidity of the limbs. Another and more painful task than that of accompanying the poor surgeon's

body to his late home was before the good clergyman. He had to break the tidings to Margaret Graham; and, from long and intimate communion with his fellow-creatures, he had too clear an insight into the human heart to doubt that she would be very much afflicted. That she had loved Dr. Kenmore with the deep and passionate attachment of youth, he did not at all believe, and, indeed, Margaret had never affected to do so; but that she had a sincere and strong friendship for him, nay, an affectionate regard, stronger though not warmer than friendship, he did fully believe, and he felt sure that she would mourn his fate with grief little less poignant than if she had lost her father. The mode, too, in which death had reached him was very painful to relate; and as he walked on and pondered, accompanied by his servant, he determined to give her no particulars, but merely to tell her that her husband had been found dead on the common, and that a coroner's jury would be summoned immediately, in order to ascertain the cause of death. This was distressing enough; but many of the tasks of a clergyman are so, and he was too frequently called upon to administer comfort upon various sad occasions to be at a loss upon this. Yet there was a certain difficulty, too, not to render his manner too commonplace, lest Margaret, for whose feelings and for whose character he had a sincere respect, should shun his consolations, from a belief that he judged her marriage with the old surgeon harshly and wrongly, and yet not to attribute to her a warmth of attachment which he felt did not exist.

The object of all these considerations met him as he entered the little parlour of the cottage, with a face pale and anxious; but the worthy rector delayed

his answer to her questions for a moment by asking kindly after her father.

"He is much better," she answered; "he woke about an hour ago, quite himself, and has since fallen asleep again—but, my dear sir——"

"I am very glad to hear it," replied the rector, "for that will be some comfort to you. I trust that your earliest and best friend may be spared to you for many years—nay, my dear young lady, sit down and listen to me. You have lost one who was deservedly dear to all who knew him, and to you more than all; but you must not repine at the will of God; and as you know that there never was any one who on this earth acted a more truly Christian part, so you may well trust that he has only gone from a scene where happiness is never unmingled with pain, to pure and perfect felicity in the bosom of his Redeemer."

Margaret sat down and wept, quietly, but bitterly. Then stretching out her hand to the worthy clergyman, she said, in a low tone,—

"Tell me all. How did it happen?"

"The particulars, my dear young lady, we do not yet know," replied the rector. "It would seem he took the small footpaths back from poor Halliday's cottage over the moor; and after having gone up by the ordinary road, we found him as we came down the other way. He had fallen upon the path, and it is probable he never moved afterwards."

"But are you sure?" exclaimed Margaret. "Is there no hope of restoring him? I have heard——"

"It is quite in vain," said the clergyman: "life had been extinct some hours when we found him. Do not buoy yourself up with one false hope; for nothing can restore to you the friend you have lost

on this earth; and your chief thought must now be your care for your good father. A coroner's inquest must, of course, be held, and then, perhaps, we shall learn more than we know at present."

Margaret asked many questions, but those she did ask were wisely answered; for her mind never turned in the painful direction from which the rector sought to lead it. From seeing the attacks to which her father had been lately subject, she was fully possessed with the idea that Kenmore had fallen a victim to a similar fit seizing him when all aid was absent, and in that belief she remained till the following day revealed to her the particulars of her husband's fate. Then, indeed, she was dreadfully shocked, and her distress was increased by being called upon to give evidence before the coroner's jury. She went through that task, however, as she did all that fell upon her at this period of her life, with calm, quiet, graceful fortitude, and, strange to say, so much true feeling mingled with her grave tranquillity, that no one even in his inmost thoughts accused her of insensibility. She proved that when Dr. Kenmore left her father's cottage he had a considerable sum of money upon his person, but that to the best of her belief no one was aware of the fact but herself and the gentleman who had paid him the amount. His servant, indeed, might know it; but the man had been sent back from Allenchurch to Brownswick, and easily proved that he had never quitted his master's house till summoned to search for him. The three persons who had met the old surgeon at the top of the moor all testified that when they saw him he was walking along with a stout step, and no other evidence of any kind was to be procured. Suspicion turned in various directions; but

the general feeling of the country was expressed by the countryman who, with his little boy, had last seen the good doctor before the murder, and who said, in giving his evidence,—

"I am sure it must have been some stranger who did it, for there is not a man in all the country round who would have hurt Doctor Kenmore."

The coroner's jury, however, were forced to return a verdict of "Murder against some person or persons unknown," for they had no means of arriving at a more definite judgment; and, as usual, the story of old Doctor Kenmore's marriage and death on the same day made a week's marvel, and was then forgotten by all but those more immediately concerned.

Margaret knew not well how to act under the peculiar circumstances in which she was placed, and therefore she did the best thing she could—she asked the rector of Allenchurch and the lawyer of her late husband to act for her. The funeral took place with as little ostentation as possible; but many hundreds of the people of Brownswick and the neighbourhood spontaneously followed the body to the grave. The iron safe in which the deceased had kept his papers, was broken open, for the key could not be found, and the first thing that was discovered was his will, by which he left to Margaret Graham, about to become his wife, or to Margaret, his wife, if the proposed marriage should have taken place before his death, all his property, real and personal, and appointed her his sole executrix and residuary legatee, taking care to guard against all cavil, almost as if he had anticipated the very fate which had befallen him. Of what his property consisted had been accurately known only to himself before his death; but everything was in good order, and in the end it

appeared that his wealth was much more considerable than had been supposed. On the examination of all the papers, Margaret found herself in possession of considerably more than a thousand per annum, principally accruing from lands in the neighbourhood of Brownswick, though there was also no small sum invested in the public funds; the savings of a long life of industry unstained by aught like parsimony or meanness. There was one passage in the will which brought tears into her eyes, for it was a mark of confidence which she felt deeply.

"Knowing dear Margaret Graham well," the good man had written at the end of the paper in his own hand, "I cannot do better for my old servants than by leaving them to her care, and begging her to reward them according as their services to me may appear to deserve."

The servants had no cause to regret that their old master had not provided for them more specifically, and they all remained with her to whose care they had been confided.

But Margaret's sorrows were not yet at an end. The fate of poor Doctor Kenmore was necessarily communicated to Mr. Graham, and the effect upon his spirits was even more severe than Margaret had anticipated. Gloom seemed to take possession of him entirely, and for some weeks he could not shake off the sad impression. His daughter's devotion and care were unbounded. Her whole time, and apparently her whole thoughts, were devoted to him; but she could not succeed in rousing him till she bethought her of calling for his counsel in the management of the landed property which had so unexpectedly become hers. From that moment Mr. Graham seemed to recover a portion at least of his

former energy. His old servant Ben Halliday was called to advise, and assist, and direct. Plans of improvement were suggested, and their execution commenced, and Ben, engaged as a sort of labouring bailiff, was brought down to the cottage at Allenchurch, which Margaret had so long inhabited with her father, while they removed to a neat small house to the westward of Brownswick. All seemed fair and smiling, when one morning, about six months after the death of Doctor Kenmore, his old schoolfellow was found dead in his bed with a placid smile upon his face and the eyes fast closed, as if he had expired in sleep so calm that death itself had not power to break it. Margaret had again to weep, though she praised God, nevertheless, that a short period of renewed prosperity, a bright gleam of sunshine at the end of a stormy day, had been granted to her father before nightfall.]

She was now alone in the world, without a tie, without a connection, but those whose conduct in the days of adversity had severed the bond between her and them for ever.

Did Margaret ever think of Allan Fairfax? Let us not inquire too closely. If she did, she tried hard to avoid it; and yet how could she help it? It was her first love—nay, her only love. She had never loved but once—she never did.

PART THE THIRD.



THE LAST TRIAL.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RESOURCE FOR DISAPPOINTMENT.

WITH the reader's good leave and permission, I will turn awhile to one of whom I have not spoken for some time; namely, Allan Fairfax. I cannot take up his history exactly where I left it, though there is one scene in that history of deep interest, which I should much wish to write even here. The construction of my tale will not let me; but I promise to return to it hereafter, and give its details. I must, therefore, pass over about a fortnight in silence, and, for the moment, leave the reader's imagination to fill up the interval as it will.

It was barely gray daylight, on the morning after the murder of Doctor Kenmore, when some one knocked at the door of Ben Halliday's cottage, and the little boy Charlie, who was already up, opened it, and beheld Mr. Fairfax, with one of the porters of the "White Lion" inn behind him. The young gentleman's face was pale and haggard, his dress not so neat as usual, and there was a look of melancholy wildness about the eyes, which struck even the little boy very much.

"Is your father gone to work?" asked Fairfax, as soon as he saw him; "I have come to get my portmanteau, Charlie, and to bid him good-bye, for I am going far over the seas, to the land of lions and tigers."

"Oh! no, father is not gone to work," replied the boy, "he can't go. He's been very ill, and was dying, like, till Doctor Kenmore blooded him."

Something almost approaching a groan broke from the lips of Fairfax; but at the same moment Ben Halliday raised his voice, saying, in a feeble tone, interrupted by a cough, "Won't you come in, sir?—my wife will be here in a moment;" and Fairfax entered the cottage, and walked up to the sick man's bedside without saying a word. For a few moments he remained in silence, gazing at Ben Halliday with an absent look; but then, rousing himself, as if by a great effort, he said,—

"So you are ill, Halliday; what has been the matter?"

"Oh! dear sir, I am glad to see you," said Mrs. Halliday, entering the cottage; "my poor husband has been at death's door, with inflammation of the lungs, the doctor says. But he's a deal better now, only the cough is troublesome. All the pain is gone, and he can breathe easy."

"It is unfortunate," said Fairfax; "he will be out of work for some time, I am afraid, Mrs. Halliday," and he paused for a minute or two. "Take up that portmanteau, my man," he continued, speaking to the porter, "and carry it down. Let it be put upon the coach with the other things; I will be down almost as soon as you."

The man charged his shoulder with the load, and walked away; and then Fairfax sat down for a moment, saying,—

"I cannot stay now, my good people, but I am very sorry for you, and would willingly do what I can to assist you. Here, Mrs. Halliday, here are five sovereigns to help you through your husband's illness. I am somewhat richer than I was, Halliday, so you must not mind taking it."

"Oh! Mr. Fairfax, I cannot, indeed," said Ben

Halliday; but Fairfax beckoned to the wife, and she, like a wise woman, suffered him to put the money into her hand, thanking him a thousand times for his goodness.

Fairfax stayed a few minutes longer, almost all the time plunged in deep thought, and then rose suddenly to depart.

"God bless you, sir!" said Ben Halliday, as the young gentleman shook hands with him; and Mrs. Halliday also said, "God bless you!" and the boy and girl looked earnestly in his face, as if they would have said the same but for shyness. But at the same moment, a head was thrust in at the other door, and a face grinned at him maliciously, while the voice of Tommy Hicks cried,—

"You have sent away my seat, and I'll spite you if I catch you."

Fairfax shook his fist at him; and bidding the cottagers adieu, took his way back towards the town with hasty strides.

"How ill Mr. Fairfax looks," said Mrs. Halliday, speaking to her husband, "and so sad, too."

Ben Halliday shook his head gloomily, and answered,—

"Ay, Bella, there's many a bitter story amongst the rich and the great, as well as among the poor and the lowly. A fine coat often covers a sad heart; and I am afraid Mr. Fairfax has cause to regret that he ever came down to Brównswick. Well, he is a fine, noble gentleman, God bless him!"

In the meanwhile the person they spoke of proceeded on his way till he reached the town of Brownswick, and walked through the streets to the door of the "White Lion," at which was standing the morning coach for London, with the horses being put-to.

Fairfax saw, though he hardly noticed, a number of groups of the townspeople standing at the corners of the streets, and talking eagerly together. The guard and the coachman, too, as they bustled about round the coach, and in and out of the office, exchanged a number of sentences with a party of idlers who were standing near; but Fairfax heard not a word of what they said; and pausing for an instant at the inn-door, he called for his bill, and paid it without going in, gave waiters, and chambermaid, and boots the usual fee, and putting on a thick great-coat, which was officiously held for him by several of the people of the inn, he inquired if his luggage had been put up, and then took his place upon the coach-box. In a minute or two the coachman was by his side; two fat elderly ladies rolled out of the office and into the vehicle; a dull-looking man got upon the top, and away the coach went for London as fast as the four grays could carry it.

Nothing of any kind occurred on the journey which would interest the reader in the slightest manner to repeat. Allan Fairfax arrived in safety, about three o'clock on the following day, at an inn in the giant of cities. He instantly set out for the chambers of a lawyer in Gray's Inn, gave a number of directions, signed several papers, and then said,—

"Now, Mr. Tindle, you must manage all the rest of my affairs yourself, for I shall set out to-morrow morning early for Plymouth. I shall there catch the "John Green" East-Indiaman—at least I hope so—and I trust to be in India, and with my regiment, in a few months."

"Dear me, sir, you surprise me," cried the solicitor; "why, when you left London, you intended to sell out, and I can't act in this business, or any other, without a power of attorney."

"It does not matter, Mr. Tindle," said Fairfax; "all my views are changed. If a power of attorney is necessary, you must get it ready directly, and let me have it to-night at the inn where I am staying in the City; I will sign it immediately."

"But will you not see your brothers, sir?" asked the solicitor. "I am sure they have acted very handsomely in this business."

"When they could not do otherwise," answered Fairfax, bitterly; "you will say, probably, that they might have protracted the affair by a suit-at-law, but I must ever feel, Mr. Tindle, that by affecting to believe there was some ground for my father's wild—I must call it insane—notion regarding my birth, and taking advantage of that to deprive me for so long of even an equal share of his property, they dissolved every tie between us. I wish not, in the slightest degree, to have any dispute with them; and trust that, if ever I return from India, we shall live on amicable terms; but I cannot forget the past, and therefore shall go away without seeing them. You may say anything civil on my part that you like, when you come to wind up the whole affair, but it would be better for me not to see them at present."

"But will you not want money, my dear sir?" inquired the lawyer; "money, without which, as you have lately found, nothing is to be done on this earth? I am sure if, under present circumstances, I can be of any service——"

"No, no," answered Fairfax, "I have enough for the moment. Many thanks to you, however. When the whole is finished, you may pay a thousand pounds into the hands of my agent, as I shall want to buy some horses and other things when I get to Calcutta; and now, pray get the papers ready directly,

that there may be no delay; for, signed or not signed, I go at five o'clock to-morrow."

And Allan Fairfax went. At Plymouth he caught the vessel he expected to find, embarked, and reached Calcutta in safety. His fellow-passengers remarked how cold, and grave, and disagreeable he was, and his brother officers, when he rejoined his regiment, observed that Fairfax was sadly changed, The gay, light spirit was gone; the brilliant fancy that played round all things, no longer enlivened his conversation; but stern thought seemed to have taken possession of him, and to hold him bound as in a chain. Always famous for his gallantry, Fairfax was now rash; and in the despatches from one of the many fields which have lately been fought in India, his name was twice marked—once as deserving public thanks for his services against the enemy, and once as severely wounded.

There was an eye which read the despatch in England, and a cheek that glowed warmly at the account of his chivalrous daring. But when the list of killed and wounded was read over, and Margaret Graham came to the words, "Captain Allan Fairfax, severely," there were tears dropped upon the paper, and she laid it down with a heavy sigh.

Two years had passed since Fairfax was at Brownswick, and Margaret had laid by her widow's weeds. Young, beautiful, graceful, excellent, and bright, who with free heart and hand would not have sought her? But the life she lived was so retired, that no one had any opportunity of pleading love. She came upon the people in the neighbourhood by glimpses. Some persons were necessarily admitted on business, The rector of Allenchurch, and the vicar of Allerdale, dined with her often, with their wives, bringing the

daughter of the latter; the former had no children. But Margaret had made a hard bargain with them, that they were never to ask her in return. There was only one other person of whom she saw much; and that was a Miss Harding, who had acted as bridesmaid on her marriage to Dr. Kenmore. She was the daughter of a neighbouring clergyman, who, at his death, had left her in great poverty; but she had received a very good education, and sang beautifully. Without hesitation, she had instantly applied herself to earn her own bread by teaching music, and she had been Margaret's first instructor. Her conduct had been praiseworthy in every respect; her manners were graceful and ladylike; and though she was fifteen or sixteen years older than her pupil, a friendship had arisen between them, which Mr. Graham had always encouraged, though his wife had not appeared to approve of it. In the day of their adversity, Miss Harding had been of service in many respects; and now she was Margaret's frequent companion during her solitude, taking part in her pleasures, and, with a gentle cheerfulness, brightening a house into which melancholy thoughts would still intrude frequently.

One day, when she was sitting with her friend, shortly after the news of the battle which I have mentioned had arrived in England, she looked up from the part of the newspaper she was reading, asking,—

"Did you not once know a Mr. Fairfax, Margaret?"

"Yes," answered Margaret, with a sudden start. "Is there anything about him there? I did not see it."

"It is about some relation of his, I suppose," re-

plied Miss Harding. "See here—'Death of Sir William Fairfax. We regret to announce that Sir William Fairfax, Member for the Western Division of the County of———, departed this life on Tuesday last, at his house in Portland Place. He is succeeded in his title and the family estates by his cousin, Captain Allan Fairfax, who lately distinguished himself so much in India, the late baronet having only left daughters. Sir Allan is expected daily in England.'"

Margaret was drawing, and she continued to draw; but after a few minutes, she rose and left the room; and when she returned, Miss Harding thought she had been weeping. From that moment the latter never mentioned the name of Fairfax in Margaret's hearing. Two more months passed over without any event, and Margaret Graham reached her four-and-twentieth birthday. Miss Harding passed the day with her, and Margaret would fain have engaged her to stay several more, but her friend replied,—

"I cannot, Margaret. I am engaged to-morrow evening to Sir Wild Clerk's, to sing, you know," she added, with a smile, "and I have still to gain my bread."

"You need not, unless you like, Eliza," replied Margaret.

"What! change the friend for the dependant, Margaret?" said Miss Harding; "no, no; it is better as it is. At all events, I must go to these good people, for I have promised; but, if you like, I will come back the next morning."

"I do like very much," answered Margaret, with a smile; and so it was settled.

CHAPTER XII.

A COUNTRY ROUT.

The party at Sir Wild Clerk's was as large as the neighbourhood of Brownswick would furnish. He was a wealthy man, a man of ancient family in the county, and, in fact, a very good sort of person; but he had been seized with a desire of seeing his eldest son, a raw lad from college, represent a borough in Parliament, and therefore he crammed his house full once or twice a-month. Something had delayed Miss Harding till more than one half of the guests had arrived. She expected no very great attention; she knew that she was invited for her voice, and as she had no vote, that if she had not been able to sing and amuse others, she would not have been invited at all. She was accustomed to the thing,—had her mind made up to it, and therefore was not at all surprised that, with the exception of two or three of her pupils, who, in the simple kindness of a young girl's heart, greeted her warmly, nobody took much notice of her till Lady Clerk asked her to sit down to the piano, and she sang a little ballad, of which she was very fond, and Margaret also. At the end of the first stanza she raised her eyes, and saw a gentleman standing beside the lady of the house (who seemed to be paying him very great attention), with his face turned towards her, gazing at her steadfastly. She thought him remarkably handsome, and certainly there was something in his air and manner which distinguished him from every one else in the

room. He was a young man, too, tall and spare in form, with a face very pale, and an air of thoughtful gravity, which always has something of dignity in it. The moment that her eyes met his, he averted his glance, and continued with his head bent, as if to hear what Lady Clerk was saying; but yet there was a look of abstraction on his face, which did not seem to show any great attention. When her song was done, the lady, to her surprise, moved up to thank her and to express her pleasure, and she was followed by a stranger, who was introduced to her by a name which she did not hear; for a patronising connoisseur young lady—they are a class—came up to declare she was enchanted, and to beg that the next thing she sang might be "So-and-so."

Miss Harding sang it at once, though she disliked it very much, and then retiring, quietly took a seat in the next room, till she should be called upon again. There was a vacant chair on one side of her, and a deaf old lady on the other, who asked her why she did not sing that night; and while she was explaining, as well as she could to one who could not hear, that she had just been singing, the gentleman to whom she had been introduced came and sat down beside her.

"That is a delightful ballad, Miss Harding," he said; "I mean the first one you sang, not the second, which did not please me as much. Can it be procured? I have heard it once before: and to hear it again has the effect of the poet's spice winds in the Indian seas, which bear over the wide waters the perfumes of bright lands left far away. It calls back happy days that never will return."

"I do not know that any one has a copy of it but myself and one friend," replied Miss Harding; "the

music was composed by my father, who is dead; the words by a young friend, who is dead also;" and she sighed.

"May I ask who is fortunate enough to possess the other copy?" asked the stranger.

"Oh, yes," she answered; "it is Mrs. Kenmore, formerly Miss Graham. Perhaps you may have heard her sing it."

The stranger's cheek flushed for a moment, as if the sudden blaze of a fire had flashed upon it, and then turned deadly pale again, but he made no answer for several moments. When he did speak, he asked, somewhat abruptly,—

"Is she still living in this neighbourhood?"

"Oh, yes," replied Miss Harding; "she is living at her house at Nutley, about two miles from this place. Indeed, she never quits it."

"I have just heard," said the stranger, in the same abrupt manner, "that her husband is dead."

Miss Harding gazed at him for an instant, for she thought his tone was very strange, and she saw that his eyes were fixed upon a spot on the floor, while his lip was quivering, as if with strong emotion.

"Yes," she replied, coldly, "he has been dead for more than two years. He was murdered on his wedding-day."

The stranger started as if she had struck him; but for several minutes he uttered not a word, and thinking him both odd and disagreeable, she was going to cross the room to some people whom she knew and saw at the other side, when he renewed the conversation with a very much altered manner.

"You must think me very strange," he said; "but first your song, and then your conversation, recalled times long past, and persons long gone. I must not

make you think me quite a savage, however, although I have lived long in very uncivilised places, which must plead my excuse for all that you see odd. The sight of white people thronging the roads and thoroughfares does not always bring back our European notions at once."

"Have you lived, then, so many years amongst blacks?" demanded Miss Harding; "I should think you had hardly had time to forget the customs of your own land; but I certainly do not mean to imply that you have done so, although some of your questions were abrupt enough."

"Time to forget!" repeated her companion, "it does not depend upon time, my dear lady. Time slowly grinds out the characters of the past; there are events that efface them in an instant. Long habits, cherished ideas, feelings that we think engrafted in our very nature, will sometimes give way under bitter sorrows, or severe disappointments, or acts which sweep the world of the heart like a hurricane, and leave nothing to be remembered but themselves."

"I know it," replied Miss Harding.

"Do you?" inquired the stranger; "I am sorry for it; for none can know and comprehend such things but those who have suffered them."

"Women often suffer more than men know," replied his companion; "but they have greater powers of submission, if I may use the term. They have an instinct that they are born to endure, and they endure more patiently than men."

"Or, perhaps, than men can conceive," replied he.

"Assuredly," answered the lady; "we have an instance of it very near. I do not believe that any man could imagine, unless he had seen and known

it all, step by step, how much has been endured with unmurmuring patience and high resolution by Margaret Graham—for I must still call her so. She is ever Margaret Graham to me."

"Oh! yes, call her so, call her so," said the stranger, earnestly; so earnestly that the lady gazed at him, but no longer with surprise.

"You must have known her well," she said.

The stranger did not reply for a moment, and then answered in a low tone,—

"I thought so."

"Then you did," replied Miss Harding, warmly, "for no one can ever be deceived in Margaret Graham."

"Did you ever watch the clouds," asked the stranger, "when, on a calm autumnal day, they float slowly along the verge of the evening sky, changing their forms as they pass along, and showing us, now snowy mountains and towering alps, now castles and palaces, kings' thrones and heads of giants; now wolves, or lions, or crocodiles, or sometimes a mighty eye looking out in radiance upon us from the midst of a thick veil? Who can say how much of all we see is the work of our own fancy, how much in reality the forms presented to us?"

"I have," she answered, "and have often thought those cloudy shapes are true images of the objects of man's desires. But Margaret is not one of those shapes. The finest essences exist in the most solid substances. Though her imagination may be as varied as the clouds you have spoken of, the beauty of her character is in its reality."

"I applied my illustration to myself, not to her," replied her companion; "I may have fancied what

does not exist—I have often done so with inanimate objects, why not with a thinking being, without that being having any share in the deceit?"

"I cannot answer your 'why not,'" said the lady, "and yet I do not believe it. There is a convincingness in Margaret's truth which makes me feel that it is almost impossible to mistake her."

"And does she live quite alone?" demanded the other, suddenly changing to another part of the subject.

"I am often with her," said Miss Harding; "but at other times she does live quite alone."

"And is she happy?" asked the stranger.

"Nay, what a question!" exclaimed Miss Harding, with a smile. "If you will define happiness, perhaps I may be able to answer you."

"That is impossible," he said; "it is one of those simple objects, which, like the great facts of an abstract science, are felt, though undefinable. We know what they are, we admit them to our minds at once. They are truths—to man's moral consciousness what an axiom is to his intellectual faculties. We do not doubt them, though they cannot be explained to us, nor by us to others. I have known what happiness is in myself. I have seen it; but, alas! it is rarely that those who deserve it best find it in this world—but there is another."

Miss Harding was about to reply, but at the moment one of the daughters of the house approached to ask her to sing again, and the conversation dropped.

"Who is that gentleman?" she inquired, as she walked towards the piano with her young companion; "I did not hear the name when Lady Clerk introduced him."

"Oh, don't you know?" replied the girl; "that is the Indian hero, Sir Allan Fairfax."

Miss Harding mused, but made no reply.

CHAPTER XIII.

RE-UNITED LOVERS.

"Come, Eliza, put on your bonnet, and go with me to Halliday's cottage," said Margaret, the morning after the party at Sir Wild Clerk's.

"Oh, stay a little while, till I have finished copying this song," replied her friend; "we shall have plenty of time afterwards."

Margaret stayed; but Miss Harding was very long in copying the song, longer than Margaret had ever seen her at a similar task. When it was done, she had some other little matter to do, and she was very slow over that, too. Margaret wondered what could be the matter with her; till at length her companion rose with a sigh, and looked out of the drawing-room window.

"Do you think it will continue fine?" she asked.

"Oh, yes!" replied Margaret, "there is not a cloud in the sky. Come, Eliza, you are idle this morning, or tired with that party last night. The air will do you good;" and Miss Harding went to put on her bonnet and shawl, saying to herself, "Now, he will come while we are out. I do believe there is a fatality in these things."

She did not hurry herself, however; but, nevertheless, she was dressed for her walk, and out of the garden gate with her friend, without any visitor making his appearance. Passing on their way, they proceeded through some rich green lanes, the paths sometimes winding on between high banks which shut out the scenery around, sometimes mounting up and affording a view, over the hedge and between the trees, of the sweeping lines of the lower ground, with hill and moor rising purple behind. How beautiful Nature often frames her pictures, and how much

more they gain by that framework of green boughs, or gray rocks, or old church window, or heavy-browed arch, than by all the carving and gilding in the world! It was a fine summer's day, bright, yet no longer without a cloud, for a few masses of vapour low down in the sky, white at the edges and fleecy brown at the centre, were moving slowly along through the air, and sweeping the earth with their blue shadows. Margaret often paused to gaze; for, to use a curiously-constructed phrase, she had much of the poetry of the painter in her nature. Miss Harding had less. She had more of the ear than the eye; her imagination revelled in sounds, and she was fond of shutting her eyes, not as some people do, to see undisturbed the pictures of fancy, but to hear her songs. Besides, she was anxious to get back again as soon as possible, so that she often called Margaret forward when her fair companion, all unconscious of what was passing in her bosom, would fain have stayed to gaze and meditate, and, with sad memories softened, to dream sweet dreams of what might have been.

Four-and-twenty; it is no unpleasant age. There is nothing like decay in it; the flower has grown and expanded, but not the very edge of a leaf has withered; the perfume of hope must still be in its breast, unless it be blighted, indeed, by some terrible storm. She was looking very lovely that morning; more so, indeed, than ever. Whether it was that, like the chameleon, she took her hues from that which surrounded her, and that the loveliness of the day made her more lovely, or that some mysterious sympathy told her a change was coming, and brightened her looks with hope and expectation, I cannot tell; but certainly she was very beautiful.

They had gone on for nearly a mile, and were within a couple of furlongs of Ben Halliday's comfortable house, when, suddenly dropping down the bank from the side of a tall ash tree, appeared the broad but stunted figure and disagreeable countenance, with its wide mouth and slightly squinting eyes, of the idiot, Tommy Hicks. He stood right in the

way before them, and Miss Harding suddenly stopped, saying, "Ah! there is that frightful man. He always alarms me. Really, they should shut him up."

"Oh, he will do us no harm," answered Margaret, with a smile. "He is a little inclined to mischief, but more, I believe, in a spirit of fun than anything else; but come on, and do not seem frightened at him, for that always provokes him."

In the meanwhile, Tommy Hicks was himself approaching, talking all the way he came in a low and muttering tone, sometimes laughing, and sometimes swearing, for he was not at all times very choice in his language.

"Ah, my pretty girl," he said, coming up to Margaret, "so you are out walking."

"Yes," answered Margaret, trying to pass him; "it is a fine day, you see."

"For birds to look for their mates," answered Tommy; "but you sha'n't have him—I won't give my consent; it's no use talking, though he were the sun, and the moon, and the stars, you sha'n't have him; and to prevent it, you shall marry me; so come along."

"I am afraid I can't this morning, Tommy," answered Margaret, mildly; "you must let me pass, my good man, for I am going on business."

"No, I won't," answered the idiot; "my business first; you shall marry me here, under the green tree. Then you can't have two husbands in one day, and I am determined that fellow shall not have pretty Meg of Allerdale. May he be ——" and the idiot began to curse and swear most fearfully. "You can't have two husbands in one day, I tell you; it is against the law. King George would have done the same if he could, but they would not let him; for though King David had nine wives, and his sons increased and multiplied, yet that was a long time ago."

"Let me pass, sir," said Margaret, somewhat sternly, fixing her eye firmly upon him. "Stand out of the way directly."

But idiots and madmen have an extraordinary power of divining whether those who attempt to command them are really frightened at them or not; and Tommy Hicks perceived at once that, notwithstanding her assumed calmness, Margaret was alarmed.

"I won't," he cried, with a loud laugh; "you shall be my wife this minute. I take you for my wedded wife;" and at the same moment he stretched out his hand, and grasped her tight by the arm.

Margaret did not scream, but Miss Harding did, loud and fearfully.

"Hold your tongue," shouted the idiot, without letting go Margaret's arm; "hold your tongue, or I will dash your brains out. Is that the way that bridesmaids scream at a wedding?"

As he spoke, the sound of a horse's feet galloping hard were heard, and turning round to look in the direction from which they had come, Miss Harding saw a gentleman on horseback, followed by a servant, advancing at full speed, apparently alarmed by her cries. He was up in a moment, and off his horse, and the next instant his horsewhip went round and round the shoulders of Tommy Hicks, applied with a right good will and a powerful arm, in a manner which soon sent the idiot howling down the lane.

Margaret Graham turned as pale as death; but the gentleman withdrew his left arm from his rein, gave his horse to the servant, and holding out his hand to the lady, said, in a low tone, "Margaret, do you not know me?"

The blood rushed back again into poor Margaret's face, writing the glowing tale of the heart on cheek, and forehead, and temples. "Oh, yes, I know you," she answered, giving him her hand; "but I have been alarmed, and am agitated still, and faint."

"Lean upon me," said Fairfax, drawing her arm through his, and gazing at her tenderly. Then recollecting that there were others present, he turned to Miss Harding with a smile, and held out his hand, saying, "I must claim acquaintance here, too."

"Willingly acknowledged," replied Miss Harding,

shaking hands with him; "but I really think, Sir Allan, that we had better get home again as soon as possible, for Margaret has been very much frightened, and so have I, too."

"It is the best plan we can pursue," answered Fairfax, "if she is able to walk so far. I have been to your house," he continued, turning to the beautiful girl on his arm, "and most fortunately inquired which way you had gone, when the servant told me you were out. Can you walk, Margaret, or shall I send for a carriage?"

"I can walk," she answered, with a faltering voice; "I can walk quite well. I shall very soon be better. I was going to Halliday's cottage to speak of some matters to be done at the farm; but perhaps it will be better to go home now."

"Much," answered Fairfax; and, leading her towards her own house, he told his servant to follow with the horses, and for full five minutes walked on by Margaret's side in perfect silence. It was upon his left arm she leaned, however; and she felt his heart beating in a way which told how agitated he was. Oh, what a host of feelings were there in the bosom of Fairfax at that moment! and poor Margaret, too, what were her sensations! Between these two no word of love had ever been spoken; but there are languages which have no words, and she knew that she was loved. When she had last seen him, he had called her "Miss Graham," and now three times he had said "Margaret." How did she read it? That she had always been Margaret Graham in his thoughts—that she had been his "Margaret" still, in absence, in danger, in suffering, throughout five long years. She forgave him for calling her so; she felt, she comprehended that he could give her no other name, and so they went on in silence.

Poor Miss Harding would have given all she had to be anywhere else; but wisely and prudently, as soon as she could think of what was wise and prudent, she determined to seem not to see what she could not help seeing; and, therefore, at last, she began to talk

herself, as no one else was likely to renew the conversation. "It is a frightful thing, Sir Allan," she said, "that such a dangerous creature as that should be suffered to roam about the country unrestrained. I am sure some terrible accident will happen before the magistrates see the folly of their conduct."

"I will endeavour to have something done in the matter," said Fairfax; "for the idiot's own sake, he ought to be taken care of. Do you remember, Margaret, that strange and almost ludicrous scene which took place with him at Brugh."

"It is a day I can never forget," answered Margaret; "the least circumstance that took place rests as vividly on my memory as if all had occurred yesterday."

"And on mine," replied Fairfax, sadly. "It was an ominous day: so bright in the beginning, so full of joy, and hope, and expectation: so stormy in the close, so dark, and joyless, and despairing."

"You left the party very early last night," said Miss Harding, abruptly; "at least, I did not see you after my third song was done."

"I went to bed," replied Fairfax; "I was fatigued, and thought I might as well lie down to rest, if not to sleep; and, to say the truth, as I despaired of getting near you again, I anticipated no great pleasure from the curious crowd assembled."

"Then it was at Sir Wild Clerk's that you met?" said Margaret, looking to her friend; "and yet, Eliza, you never told me he was there."

"I felt very sure Sir Allan would come to tell you himself," replied Miss Harding, "and I did not wish to play Marplot, and spoil an agreeable surprise."

"That was really kind," said Fairfax, gazing at her with a beaming smile; "besides, what could she have told?" he continued, turning to his fair companion; "only that she met a strange, abrupt, unpleasant man, who treated her for half-an-hour to conversation which was never heard at rout or ball before."

"I certainly did think, for at least ten minutes," Miss Harding answered, laughing, "that you were the most disagreeable man I ever had met with."

Margaret gazed at her with an expression of astonishment which amused her, but Fairfax replied, "And she was quite right, too, Margaret; for I felt that my conversation was very strange. I have seen thirsty men in India, coming near a well, dash every person and thing rudely aside to get one draught of the water; and so was I yesterday. She spoke of that which I was athirst to hear of, and I forgot all else—courtesies and common forms, and questioned her most rudely."

Margaret cast down her eyes till the silken fringes rested on her cheek, but she asked not what was the subject they had spoken of. The conversation, however, became more easy, and continued so till they came within sight of the house. Margaret's spirits returned, her timidity diminished in a degree, and she could even smile gaily as she asked Fairfax to come into what she called her humble dwelling. What was the deep-seated cause of the smile, she alone could tell—perhaps not even she—but it was certainly a trusting, a confiding one. She meant it probably as a welcome to an old friend; Miss Harding read it as a promise to a lover; and the moment they had entered the drawing-room, the latter went away to take off her bonnet and shawl.

The room, though not large, was well-proportioned and lightsome. There was nothing sad or gloomy about it; yet when Margaret, with a face which had become pale again, had seated herself in her usual chair, Fairfax stood beside her and gazed at her with an expression not without its melancholy, till, powerful as she was to command herself, the agitation she felt would have some external influence, and the hand which rested on the arm of the chair began to shake, so that she was forced to withdraw it and let it fall more easily upon her knee. That movement recalled her lover to himself, for it showed him how much emotion she felt, and bringing a chair to her side, he

took the hand she had withdrawn in his, and pressed his lips upon it.

"Margaret," he said, "do you think me over-confident? Do you think me too bold to treat you as I do, after an absence of five years? Yet listen to me before you reply. Hear first how and why I do so. You cannot, I am sure you will not, doubt, when I tell you that I loved you better than all else on earth, with the first, deep, sincere, ardent love of a heart which had loved none other. That love seemed not displeasing to you; and I treat you now as if only a few days had passed since we met and parted, because the time which has gone by, though it has worked a change upon my outward form, though it and the things it brought with it have crushed and bent the light spirit which once mocked at adversity, have touched not in the least my heart or its love for Margaret Graham. I feel as if not an hour had passed since I lifted you from your horse at the gates of Allerdale, as if it were impossible that there could be any other sensations towards each other in your breast and mine than there were at that now distant hour. Nay, more, Margaret; though circumstances occurred, on which I must not dwell, to make me mistake you, though you yourself, unwittingly, I do believe, confirmed my error, nay, crushed my heart, and made me seek death in the battle-field as the only boon I sought at Fortune's hands——"

"Oh, Fairfax! oh, Allan!" cried Margaret, laying her hand on his, "do not, for Heaven's sake, do not say that! Miserable as I was, I should have died had that thought been added to my misery;" and she burst into tears.

Fairfax threw his arms around her, and pressed his lips on hers. "Dear, dear girl!" he cried, "I am answered. And yet," he added, "how could you, Margaret, think it would be otherwise? Did you not see I loved you? Did you not know it? Could you doubt after what I wrote, that my love was not of a kind to bear life and disappointment easily together?"

"Wrote!" said Margaret; "wrote to me of love?

I never received but one short note from you, now not quite two years and a half ago; and there was no word of love."

"I wrote to you two days after I left Allerdale, and though my letter remained unanswered, I hoped still. But it matters not. I can easily conceive, from your mother's conduct to myself, that the letter never reached your hands. I wrote not, Margaret, to ask you to do aught that was wrong. I simply told you my love, and tried to show you its intensity; and I besought you, if you felt that you could return it, to appeal to your excellent father, as soon as he was well enough to hear you, from the decision of your mother, which I felt sure had been pronounced without his knowledge or consent. I thought I had taken means to ensure that it should reach you safely, but it seems it never did."

"Never!" answered Margaret, eagerly—"never, Fairfax. Had I ever seen it, I should have been saved much wretchedness; for I had such confidence in your honour, that in all the difficulties and sorrows that beset me soon after, I would have written to you without hesitation or doubt, to beg aid, or consolation, or advice. I thought you loved me, Fairfax—nay, I felt sure you did; but you had never told me so; and love, I had heard say, was with men in general a fleeting and changeable passion. I believed that it might be so in your case, when for more than two long years I heard nothing of you."

"I was far away," answered Allan Fairfax. "I waited for a month in hopes of a reply; and then, still not without hope, I went to seek honour and fortune, if they were to be obtained, in the pursuit of my profession, for I fancied that you might be restrained by others. Then again I never heard of aught that had happened to bring adversity to your door till I returned two years ago—as poor as ever, Margaret. I came back, indeed, on leave, hardly obtained, to transact some business of importance; for I had received in India a letter from an old and roguish clerk of my father's, informing me that he

could put me in possession of papers which would at once remedy the injustice my father had done me, under a terrible delusion, by showing. that the delusion was removed before his death, and that he had taken steps to make reparation My father's conduct to me is a long story, which I will tell you another time. At present, only let me say, that whén I arrived in London, I found that this clerk was a prisoner for debt, and that he required the sum of one hundred pounds for the papers he possessed. The thought of Margaret Graham had brought me back; the thought of Margaret Graham made me resolve to obtain these papers by any means; but I had come away in haste, almost all I had in ready money was gone in the expenses of my voyage home; my noble old uncle was dead, and I had not a hundred pounds in all the world. At the same time, the villain threatened if he did not receive the sum within ten days, to put the papers in the hands of others, or destroy them. I determined to sell my commission to raise the amount; but just then, I heard by accident of all that had occurred to your father and yourself. No, not all, but a part. I hastened down hither, leaving my lawyer to transact the business in London for me, and here I heard a report which stunned and stupified me. I inquired further; I found the report vary in different mouths. I wrote to you—I had nothing, indeed, as yet to offer but hopes; yet I resolved I would offer those, and if they failed, beg you still to unite your fate to mine, and let me labour for the support of your father and yourself. You know the answer I received. Oh, Margaret, it almost drove me mad."

"I could not help it," exclaimed Margaret; "indeed, indeed, Fairfax, I could not help it! I will tell you all by and by; but now go on. You will forgive me—you will find excuse for me when you hear. What did you do then?"

"I hardly know," answered Fairfax. "I set off for London like a madman; but by a strange accident, which I cannot now relate, I suddenly became pos-

sessed of the sum required. I went away to the King's Bench, obtained the papers, and found amongst them one written entirely in my father's own hand, acknowledging that he had deceived himself—that his idea of my being a changeling was an hallucination, and leaving me an equal share of his large property with my two brothers. They could not resist, and yielded to my claims; my agent advanced money at once; I fancied I should be in time; but I was too late—Margaret had given her hand to another, and all the world was a blank to me."

He paused in bitter thought, and Margaret gazed at him, with tears in her eyes.

"Now hear me, Fairfax," she answered; "I think you know that I will tell you the plain truth."

"I do—I am sure of it, dear Margaret," he replied. "Indeed, it is hardly necessary that you should, for I have heard much of the truth since I came down hither, and should have heard it long ago, had I not hurried away from a scene where I thought all my hopes were blasted, to seek any fate which would afford relief from thought. Yet speak of that letter; for, alas! Margaret, it certainly was very cold."

"If you had known how it wrung my heart to make it so, Fairfax," replied Margaret, "you would have pitied, and not been angry with me. We must, however, speak of painful subjects, and, therefore, I will do it at once. My father was reduced to beggary —yes, that is the term. He was ill, incapable of moving or helping himself in any way; he depended upon me for everything. I could not leave him to go out as a governess; it would have broken his heart, it would have broken mine. I could not even be absent all day teaching, for he had no one who could aid him but myself. We had but thirty pounds a-year to live upon—an annuity upon the life of a man younger than himself, and a cottage which was lent us furnished, by a kind old friend, a surgeon, who had been his school-fellow. It was all that my father would accept from any one—the loan of that small cottage. I did what I could by selling my

drawings to increase our pittance, but suddenly the annuity failed. There was nought before us but the Union workhouse, when that kind old man, whom I had known from infancy, who had received me in his arms when I first saw the light, after endeavouring to conceal the fact of the failure of the annuity, after having attempted everything in vain to induce my father to receive aid, proposed to me, as the only resource, to give my dying parent a home and comfort by marrying him. Had he been a young man, Fairfax—strange as it may seem—my heart would have revolted more than it did. He was the best, the kindest, the most generous of men."

Fairfax turned very pale; Margaret remarked it, and hurried on, not to pain him more than necessary.

"He asked me not for love—simple regard was all he required, or I must have said, No. It was to save my father. I knew not I was loved by him I loved; and I said, Yes. Once having said it, I could never unsay it. For no consideration upon earth would I have broken that promise; you could not have loved me—you could not have respected me, Fairfax, if I had. But then came your letter. Its tone was that of friendship, but not of love; yet how it agitated me, how it shook me, none has ever known or can know. I determined to trample over hesitations, hopes, affections, which I believed it would be criminal to indulge, though I crushed my own heart with them; but oh! Fairfax, I knew not I was crushing yours also, or I believe that hour would have killed me. You know the rest, I think, and I will not dwell upon it—that terrible wedding-day and its awful termination. Now tell me, could I have done otherwise than I did?—should I have been worthy of an honest man's regard if I had acted otherwise!"

Fairfax had buried his eyes in his hands, but now he raised his head suddenly, saying, "No, Margaret, no! You are an angel. Oh, let me hope, dear, excellent girl, that it may be my lot to make you forget, or to soften the remembrance of all you have suffered. Margaret, are you mine?"

"Can you ask?" she replied. "I have shown you my whole heart."

Fairfax pressed her to his heart, and Margaret rested there, with her face hid upon his bosom, and the warm tears of many mingled emotions in her eyes.

Miss Harding gave them more than an hour; and when she came down, at length, Margaret's hand was clasped in his, and she did not attempt to withdraw it.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOPES FULFILLED.

It was now that Margaret found how much she had loved. Hers was not a character to encourage and cultivate feelings dangerous to her own peace, or obstructive of the full performance of her duties to others, and she had not done so in this instance. On the contrary, she had steadily and firmly striven to keep her thoughts from resting upon her affection for Allan Fairfax—I do not say she had altogether succeeded, but she had tried—memory would recall his image, fancy would sometimes dwell upon the past, and strive to extract from it hopes for the future; but whenever she found her mind so engaged—whenever she detected the heart in thus endeavouring to betray her peace, she had always made a great effort to recall her wandering thoughts and give them employment in other things. She had always felt that she loved him, but she knew not how much—she knew not even how much she was capable of loving till love was happy. Oh, then how it overpowered her! how she dwelt upon every look and tone! how she gave up heart and mind to the one deep and tender affection! Never in the whole course of her long sorrows and adversities had Margaret wept so much as on that night after Fairfax had left her. But it was a clearing shower, that

flood of tears; and after it had passed, all was bright and smiling.

Towards dinner-time, on the first day of their meeting again, Fairfax felt himself bound in courtesy to tear himself away from her, and return to the house of Sir Wild Clerk; but ere he went, he made her promise to fix the day of their union when they saw each other on the morrow; and he added,—

"I think, my beloved, it may be as well to inform my worthy host at once of the situation in which we are placed, that neither he nor Lady Clerk may think my continued absence strange or rude. We have nothing to conceal, and therefore it will be best mentioned at once. I am too proud of my Margaret and of my love for her not to be well pleased to have it known that she returns my affection, and is about to be mine."

Margaret's eyes filled with tears.

"Surely I have cause to be proud, too," she said. "Do as you please, Fairfax; whatever you do will be pleasing to me. The family of the Clerks have been very kind, have called often, and asked me more than once to their house; but, I know not why, all society was unpleasant to me, but that of this dear friend," and she turned her kindly eyes to Miss Harding. Fairfax took that lady's hand in his, and thanked her with peculiar grace for all that she had done for Margaret.

"I trust I am not ungrateful," he said, "towards those who show kindness to myself; but their services to me, my dear Miss Harding, would seem of little value in my eyes when compared with acts of friendship to this dear girl. I trust that I shall have ample opportunity of showing my gratitude, and in other ways than in words, and in proving to you that 'the most disagreeable man in the world' is not altogether the most insensible one."

He smiled gaily as he repeated Miss Harding's expression regarding himself, and then, mounting his horse, rode back to Sir Wild Clerk's.

During dinner, every one remarked that although Sir Allan Fairfax often fell into fits of thought, yet that when he did converse, he was infinitely more cheerful and gay than on the preceding day. One of the daughters of his host, a light-hearted, familiar, merry girl, rallied him on his happy looks, declared that she was sure he had met with some delightful adventure in his morning's ride, and insisted upon knowing what it was.

"Let us have a truce till after dinner," said Fairfax, in reply, "and then I'll tell you, upon my honour, when we have not so many eyes and ears upon us."

"Oh, then, it is a love adventure," said the young lady.

"What! is there nothing but love that requires discretion?" said Fairfax. "But mind, you must be very secret, whatever it is." And after dinner he told her, as a matter of strict confidence, that he was going to be married to his first and only love, and who the person was. This may seem a strange proceeding; but Fairfax calculated justly, and before the party broke up, the secret was known to everybody in the room without his taking any more trouble about it.

Day after day he now spent with Margaret Graham; and when the period which he had promised to remain with Lady Clerk was over, he removed to his own quarters at the White Lion, where he could be more at liberty. Margaret was very happy, and Fairfax was all in all to her. He was a good deal changed, it was true, since the time when she had first known him; he was graver, almost sadder. It seemed as if present happiness effaced with difficulty the traces which past sorrow had left upon his heart. She remarked, too, and so did others, that he never mentioned the word Kenmore; and Miss Harding noticed, almost amused, that her friend's lover never referred in any manner to the period or the circumstances of Margaret's marriage to the old surgeon.

"What jealous creatures these men are," she

thought; "it is evident he cannot bear to hear of her having been nominally the wife of another."

It cost Fairfax some trouble, it is true, to avoid pronouncing the name he seemed to hate, but he did it pertinaciously. His bride was always named as "Margaret," to herself and to Miss Harding, of course; but when he had to speak of her to others, it often caused a good deal of circumlocution. He called her the "lady formerly Miss Graham," "Mr. Graham's daughter, of Allerdale;" and to her servants it was always "your mistress." It pained Margaret a little, for she could not help remarking it, and her own feelings towards poor Doctor Kenmore were those of gratitude and esteem She did not suffer it, however, to interrupt her happiness much, for she thought, when once they were married, the cause of such conduct would be removed, and she named as early a day as possible for her union with him she loved; for Margaret had no affectations.

All the neighbours became amazingly kind when they found that Mistress Kenmore was about to be married to Sir Allan Fairfax, and she suffered herself, though with a feeling of timidity from long seclusion, to be persuaded to mingle with society. She took more pleasure in it too; for every one was loud in praise of her promised husband, and only on one occasion did she meet with, or remark, one of those little touches of malevolence which are often brought forth in the breasts of the discontented by the sight of happiness in others.

"How strange it is, my dear Mrs. Kenmore," said Lady Clerk, "that Sir Allan never mentions you by your present name, and never speaks a word of your first husband—it is quite remarkable."

Margaret felt all the rudeness and the unkindness of the speech, but she answered, mildly,—

"His mind reverts more pleasantly to former and more happy days, my dear madam. Indeed, it is much more agreeable to us both to think as little as possible of a period of adversity, sorrow, and suffer-

ing, and to let memory rest on those brighter hours when I was Margaret Graham, and he was simply Allan Fairfax."

But Margaret did not go back to Lady Clerk's any more. In the meantime, all arrangements were made, the marriage-day approached rapidly, and the agitation which Margaret felt—the bright, happy, thrilling agitation—made her feel all the difference between love and friendship. A brother officer of Sir Allan's came down from London to be present at the ceremony; Margaret chose only one bridesmaid, the same who had accompanied her to the altar before; and when Fairfax was about to take leave of her on the day preceding that which was to unite them for ever, he turned to Miss Harding, and taking up a packet which had lain on the table since the morning, he said,—

"Dear Miss Harding, you must show Margaret and myself that you are not proud with two dear friends, and accept this little testimony of our united regard and affection."

"I must know what it is, Sir Allan," said Miss Harding. "Proud you shall not find me; but still there are things, there are feelings which I am sure you would not wish me to give up even for your sakes."

"I should wish you to accept that packet," said Fairfax, with a smile. "It is Margaret's wish, too; and I am sure you will not refuse her on the eve of her wedding-day."

"But what is it?" said Miss Harding, a little agitated, though she was usually very much composed.

"Open it and see, Eliza," said Margaret; "all I can say is, that Fairfax and I have done our best during the last month to make it what we could wish for you, and if you refuse it you will inflict great pain upon us."

With a hand which trembled a good deal, Miss Harding opened the thick envelope, but found nothing within but some old and new parchments, and a slip of paper apparently a catalogue of the rest.

At the head was written, "Conveyance of the Mount Cottage Estate, Adam Brown, Esquire, to Elizabeth Harding, Spinster." Then followed, "Fine and recovery," &c. &c. &c., not one word of which did Miss Harding comprehend.

"I do not understand it at all," she said, gazing bewilderod in the faces of her two friends.

"They are the title-deeds, dear Eliza," said Margaret, "of the cottage you have always so much admired, just coming out of Brownswick, and the grounds about it. They are from me and him I love, in our day of prosperity and happiness, to her who was a friend to me in the time of adversity and sorrow, You must not refuse the gift."

"I will not, Margaret," said Miss Harding, throwing her arm round her friend's neck, and kissing her. "I can bear gratitude, for that is very different from dependence."

But when, at an after period, Miss Harding came to inquire of what the gift consisted, she found that the beautiful little cottage was accompanied by furniture as beautiful, and that the grounds Margaret spoke of were not the gardens alone, but the fields around, which rendered her, moderate as she was, independent of the world altogether.

The marriage-day dawned brightly; the church was fuller of people than either Margaret or her bridegroom wished; and the ceremony was performed making Margaret and Fairfax man and wife. With a heart thrilling with joy and gratitude to Heaven—none the less because some solemn memories mingled with present happiness—Margaret was led from the vestry to the carriage which was in waiting, and left her native county for a time with him she had loved long and well. At the end of the honeymoon as it is called they were to return, and spend a short time at her house near Brownswick till the old mansion of her husband's family could be made completely ready, for it had been somewhat neglected of late; and we must pass over all that followed the marriage ceremony till they came back. Suffice it

that when they did return, and when Miss Harding met them in the hall, she looked in Margaret's eyes to read there the tale of her friend's heart, and found pure unmingled joy in every look. Would that we could stop here, where such histories generally come to an end! but Margaret's sorrows were not yet altogether over, and we must trace her course yet a little further.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIRST CLOUD.

Five or six days passed; visits were received and returned. Allan Fairfax went more than once to Brownswick without telling Margaret why or wherefore; he visited Ben Halliday in his cottage, too, several times; and there seemed to be grand consultations going on. Margaret perceived that there was a secret, but she only smiled, and let it take its course, for she felt sure that she should know it all in time, and she was so happy, so very happy, that everything took its colour from the hue of her own mind.

At length, on the Tuesday morning, after being absent from the drawing-room for some minutes, Fairfax returned to his beautiful wife with an open note in his hand.

"I must go over to Brownswick directly, dearest," he said; and then, throwing his arms round her, he kissed her tenderly, adding, "I will now tell you, my Margaret, I have bought Allerdale, and in the beloved scenes where we first met we will pass a part of every year."

"Oh, I am glad to hear it," replied Margaret; "but the money, Allan? I know it was sold for fifty thousand pounds. I hope you have not disposed of your old family estate merely to gratify me?"

"Not an acre, dear Margaret," he answered; "I told you, some time ago, that a circumstance which I

cannot relate placed in my possession a hundred pounds at the moment when my fate was in the balance for want of money. That hundred pounds procured me a number of old papers of my father's, which his clerk had kept, or rather stolen. Those papers compelled my brothers to share my father's property with me, and the sum I received was more than forty thousand pounds. Since then some interest has accumulated, so that the amount wants but little of the sum demanded for Allerdale. It is agreed that a part shall remain upon mortgage, and I thought I could not invest my money better than in the purchase of a place so dear to you and me. However, I must go over to Brownswick at once to conclude the bargain."

Margaret was very happy at this arrangement, for all the memories of Allerdale were sweet to her. She had there spent the early, bright days of life; she had there enjoyed in the days of his beneficent prosperity the society of her kind and high-minded father; she had there first become acquainted with him who was now her husband; and she thanked Fairfax for the thought of buying Allerdale as if it were all a favour to herself. His horse was soon brought round, his groom was ready at the precise moment named, and Allan Fairfax rode on eagerly towards Brownswick, entered the little town, and trotted up to the door of the dwelling-house attached to the greatest manufactory in the place. A servant in gorgeous livery presented himself, and informed Sir Allan that Mr. Hankum was not at home, but had left word, if he called, that he would be with the other magistrates at the Town Hall. To the Town Hall rode Sir Allan, and after sending in his card for Mr. Hankum to the magistrates'-room, was soon joined by that gentleman, who was peculiarly polite and courteous. He led the young baronet into a committee-room, and, begging him to be seated, said,—

"Well, Sir Allan, I suppose all is settled except signing a little memorandum of the terms. It is a

beautiful place, and nothing would induce me to part with it, but that I find it takes me away from my business. However, I am delighted that it falls into the hands of a gentleman of such distinction, and a friend of poor Graham's, who, I may say, made it."

"You are very kind," replied Sir Allan, "and I think we may as well draw up the memorandum at once. You are more conversant with such things than I am; perhaps you will have the kindness to do so."

"Certainly, certainly," answered the manufacturer, and taking a pen he wrote a little preamble, and began to state the terms agreed upon.

At the very first, however, a difference of opinion arose between him and Fairfax as to whether timber trees were to be included in the purchase for the sum named. Mr. Hankum thought that he had expressly reserved them in his first letter on the subject. Fairfax assured him he had not. Mr. Hankum, in the politest manner, requested to see the letter, declaring himself quite ready to abide by whatever he had said.

Sir Allan answered, that he had not the letter with him, but that it could be procured in a short time, and he would send his servant for it while they went over the other particulars. Taking up a pen and a piece of the committee-room paper, he wrote as follows,—

"DEAREST MARGARET,

"Open my writing-desk, of which I send the key, and take out the packet of letters which you will find on the right-hand side at the top. If you have any doubt as to which I mean, the signature 'Josiah Hankum' will show you. Send the packet to me by the groom who bears this.

"Your affectionate husband,

"ALLAN FAIRFAX."

Enclosing the key of his writing-desk, he sealed

the packet, and gave it to his groom, ordering him to make haste and bring back an answer.

Then, returning to Mr. Hankum, he proceeded to discuss the other items of the memorandum, which were gone through in less than ten minutes, as no further difficulty occurred.

"Pray do not let me detain you from business, Mr. Hankum," said Fairfax, as soon as all was concluded; "I will wait here, and send in for you when the servant returns."

"Why not walk into the justice-room with me, Sir Allan?" said the great manufacturer; "you will doubtless be soon upon the bench, and, by the way, there is a case coming on that may interest you, for the man is a notorious poacher who has been at my preserves up there—yours they will soon be, I trust."

"What is his name?" asked Fairfax.

"Jacob Halliday," replied Mr. Hankum; "a cousin, I think, of Lady Fairfax's bailiff."

"Poor fellow," answered Fairfax, in a tone of commiseration; "I am sorry for him; he was hardly treated by the farmer who employed him, I have understood, and driven to desperation."

Mr. Hankum was not sorry to have this indication of his companion's views, for he was very well inclined to court the friendship of the young baronet, who was about to become his neighbour, and he led the way to the justice-room, determined to take the best possible view of Jacob Halliday's case. It was already before the magistrates when the two gentlemen entered, but the proceedings were interrupted immediately on their appearance, and Mr. Hankum introduced the young baronet to a fat, shrewd, small-eyed man, in the chair, named Sir Stephen Grizley, knight. He was a jocular magistrate, very lenient in his way, and who seemed to look upon all the functions of justice as the best joke in the world. We must all have seen such men on country benches, and therefore it would be useless to describe him further, merely noticing, that notwithstanding his lenity and his merriment, he had great tact in finding out

the truth by not the most formal or customary processes.

As soon as the magistrates were seated again, and Fairfax with them, the case of Jacob Halliday was resumed; and as he stood before the justices, with a wild and haggard, but not irresolute look, he turned his eyes towards the face of the young baronet, with an expression of hope, as if he expected to find sympathy there.

A gamekeeper and a looker-out proved that they had found the prisoner in one of the copses of Allerdale during the preceding night, and that a little further on they had found a hare in a springe. There had also been found upon Jacob Halliday's person several very suspicious looking bits of wire, but none of them made up into the form of a noose, springe, or gin, nor was there any game found upon him. This was the whole of the evidence, and it was just the sort of case in which one bench of magistrates would convict and another dismiss, according as their prejudices led them.

"Now, Jacob," said Sir Stephen Grizley, "you know, my good fellow, you are a terrible poacher."

"Perhaps I may be, your worship," replied Halliday; "but if I am, I should like to know what made me?"

"My good friend, you must not put awkward interrogatories to the bench," said Sir Stephen, chuckling; "perhaps you may say it was Farmer Stumps—Stumps is a hard fellow; perhaps the new poor law—the new poor law is a hard fellow; but I am afraid hungry guts and empty purse cannot be received by us as an apology for poaching."

"But I was not poaching then," answered Halliday.

"You were trespassing at all events," observed one of the magistrates.

"No, I was not," said the prisoner; "the path is a beaten path, and every one about there knows it is."

"I think I can answer for that fact myself," said Fairfax; "I have crossed through the coppice by that path several times."

"What, at night?" asked Sir Stephen.

"Yes, at night," replied Fairfax, "if I understand the description rightly."

"It is the path that crosses away from the red post," said the gamekeeper, in a surly tone; "people do go along it, I know, but they've no right, and they had better not let me catch 'em."

"In regard to the right," said the young baronet, "I can form no direct judgment; but I know that it is frequently used by people of all classes, and it was first pointed out to me by the late Mr. Graham, as a short cut from his house to the moor."

"What do you say to all this, Hankum?" asked the jolly chairman; "if you are fond of roast pheasant, you must block up that path, I think."

"I think, Sir Stephen, the case won't stand," said Mr. Hankum. "I love pheasant well, but justice better."

"Bravo!" cried the knight. "Did the prisoner make any resistance, keeper?"

"I can't say he did," answered the person questioned; "but that was 'cause he knew he had nothing upon him. If he had, there would have been precious work going."

"Case dismissed," said Sir Stephen; "but take my advice, Master Jacob, and cure yourself of your taste for game."

"I don't mean to be saucy, sir," replied Jacob Halliday, "for you're a good, kind gentleman, and as ready to do justice to the poor as to the rich; but I will feed my wife and children somehow; and as for this fellow, if he stops me in that path again, he had better mind his bones."

"I'll stop thee wherever I find thee," replied the keeper; and with these mutual indications of good-will they left the justice-room.

Another case was being called on, when the groom of Sir Allan Fairfax returned, and sent in the packet of letters to his master, who retired with Mr. Hankum to the committee-room, and the first proposal of the manufacturer was read. It turned out that Fairfax

was neither quite right nor quite wrong, for the stipulation regarding the timber trees was not very distinctly put, yet it might be implied, and both yielding a little, it was agreed that the timber should be surveyed and valued, and that Sir Allan should pay one half the estimated worth. Some other minor arrangements regarding the speedy transfer of the property occupied about half-an-hour more, and then Fairfax mounted his horse and rode home to find all its sunshine clouded.

"I am sorry to say, sir, my lady is very ill," said a servant meeting him in the hall.

"Ill!" exclaimed Fairfax, in great alarm; "what is the matter?"

"She has fainted twice, sir," said the man, "and this time we cannot bring her to, all we can do."

Fairfax passed him in an instant, and ran up stairs to Margaret's bed-room, with feelings in his bosom which he had not known that he could experience.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WORST STORM.

MARGARET GRAHAM was sitting, calmly writing a note, about an hour after her husband had left her, when a servant entered with a small packet in his hand, saying, "John says, my lady, that Sir Allan wishes for an answer directly."

The lady took the letter, and, opening it, found the words which, as we have already seen, her husband had written from the Town Hall.

"Wait a moment," she said, "and I will bring the papers directly;" and, proceeding with the little key in her hand to a room which had been fitted up expressly for Fairfax during their absence, she advanced to the table on which the writing-desk stood, and put the key in the lock. It opened with some difficulty,

for, in more than one campaign which it had gone through, the lock had been somewhat damaged, and on arriving at the inside, Margaret deranged the position of the desk on the table, and nearly threw it down. It opened at length, however, and she found the papers where Fairfax had told her, methodically tied up by themselves. Without closing the desk again, she went to the door, called the servant to her, and gave him the packet for his master, and then returning, she shut down the upper part of the writing-case, and pressed it down to lock it. In so doing she overset the balance of the desk upon the table, and it fell to the ground almost upon her feet; but the sudden concussion caused both upper and lower part to fly open; a number of papers strewed the floor, and a secret drawer, common in all writing-cases, I believe, came partly out. Margaret hurried to gather up the papers, placed them on the table, and then lifted the desk, when the drawer came further out, and she could not help seeing what it contained. How strange is association! There was nothing there but a pair of old-fashioned silver shoe-buckles; but the sight made Margaret in a moment tremble violently. She turned away her eyes—she would not look at them at first; but, with a cheek like marble, she gathered up the papers from the table with a hasty hand, and thrust them in confusion into the lower part of the desk, The buckles were still staring her in the face; there they lay before her, and it seemed as if they had some strange power of attracting her eyes to themselves, till at length she stood and gazed at them, unable to close the desk. She could not resist it; she took them out; she turned them round. There was a mark upon one of them as if a bloody finger had pressed it; and on the inner rim of each was engraved "A. K." Andrew Kenmore."

There could be no doubt of the fact; they were the buckles worn by her murdered husband at the time of his death; there was the mark of his blood upon them!

Margaret put them hastily back again, shut the drawer and the desk, and then stood leaning on the table in thought.

"How can Fairfax have got them?" she asked herself, while a crowd of painful and terrible memories crowded upon her; "this may lead to the detection of the murderer. He was down wandering about here at the time, I know, for Dr. Kenmore saw him. Where could he have found them? I must tell him what has happened, and ask him—yet I hardly dare. Any reference to that time or the poor old man seems to pain and irritate him. Yet it is a duty, and I must do it. It is very strange that he should be so unwilling to speak upon that which surely can wake no jealous susceptibility in his heart.

Margaret's thoughts were approaching dangerous ground. As yet the emotion she had felt proceeded solely from the associations which the sight had called up. What made her turn so suddenly pale again? The first whisper of a doubt was heard. Oh, how indignantly she repelled it the next moment, with expanded nostril and curling lip, as if some one else had hinted a suspicion of him she loved. It was folly—madness to think of such a thing. What, Fairfax, the brave, the noble, the generous, to hurt a poor old man like that! But, oh! that clinging thing, doubt, how it adheres to the human mind when once it has got the least hold! She asked herself whether the lover might not have met the husband, and whether some quarrel might not have ensued? A chance blow!—Heaven and earth, how her brain reeled! That mysterious hundred pounds which he had more than once mentioned, without ever stating how it had been obtained, telling her he could not explain—his abhorrence of the subject of her ill-starred marriage—of the very name of Kenmore—all came rushing upon her in a moment.

"Nonsense, nonsense!" she cried; but the agitation of the very thought was too much, and she fell fainting upon the floor.

She did not lie there long, for the man-servant

came seeking her to tell her that Ben Halliday was in the hall, and wished to speak with her. When he found his fair mistress fainting on the carpet, he rang loud, and called for help, and Halliday himself ran in with the maid. When laid upon the sofa, a little water sprinkled on her face soon brought Margaret back to consciousness, and when her recollection fully returned, she felt ashamed of the agitation she had experienced, and its cause. Rising gracefully from the couch, she thanked the faithful people round her, said she was better, and seeing Halliday there, asked if he wanted anything.

"Yes, my lady," replied the good man; "but it will do quite well another time."

"No, Halliday, no," she answered; "I am nearly well again now. I will speak with you in a minute," and she put her hand to her head as the same train of thoughts which she strove to banish returned. "What is it, Halliday?" she inquired.

The man paused, looking at the servants, and then replied—"Another time will do quite well, my lady."

"Leave us, William, and you, too, Martha, said Margaret, speaking to the footman and her maid. "Now Halliday, what is it?"

"Why, it was first about my cousin Jacob, my lady," replied Ben Halliday; "I have never yet liked to ask you to give him work, for, poor fellow, he has been driven by poverty and other things to do a good deal that he ought not to do, and I have helped him as far as I could myself; but he spoke to me about it the other day, and seemed very much vexed that he could not earn his bread honestly, and he promised upon his word, if you would give him a trial, he would never do a wrong thing again. I told him that I would let you know what he said, but that I would not hide from you that I knew he had been a good deal out poaching; but I do believe it was only to feed his wife and boy."

"Well, try him, Ben," replied Lady Fairfax, with an absent air, "but only you must see he keeps his

word. Was there anything else you wished to say?"

"Nothing, my lady," replied Ben Halliday; "but only, if Sir Allan had been at home, to give back something he left at my cottage one morning, between two and three years ago."

"Ah! when was that?" asked Margaret, eagerly.

"Oh, ma'am, it was just at a time that it is not pleasant to speak of," replied the good man; "he came so kindly—it was the very morning after, and hardly daylight; and when he found how ill I was, he gave me five sovereigns. When he went away, we found a key upon the floor, just where he had been sitting. He must have dropped it when he took out his purse, I think, and I have always been wishing to give it back, but have forgotten."

"The morning after?" said Margaret, gazing at him with a straining eye, "after what?"

"Oh! a very sad night, my lady," replied Halliday, "when we lost a very good man in these parts."

"A key!" said Margaret; "a key! let me see it."

"Oh, yes, my lady," replied the peasant, feeling in his pockets. "Ay, here it is," and he produced a strong and very peculiar key.

Margaret started up and caught it from his hand. "It is mine," she said, with a gasp, gazing at it with deep melancholy, "it is mine."

She knew it too well; it was the key of Kenmore's iron safe, and the next moment she fell back again in another death-like swoon.

"What a fool I was to talk to her about the good doctor's murder," said Halliday, running to the door to call the servants. But this time all their efforts were unavailing to recall her to herself, and they had carried her to her bed-room about five minutes when Fairfax himself returned.

He was by her side in a moment; he held her in his arms; he directed prompt and judicious means for her recovery, and in about a quarter of an hour Margaret opened her eyes again, and found her head resting on her husband's bosom.

Who can tell the emotions of that moment? Love, confidence, fear, doubt, suspicion, mingling in the most strange and fearful chaos that ever found place in human heart. She lay there and sobbed, and Fairfax soothed and supported her, utterly ignorant of all that was passing within. She grew a little calmer, but fits of deep and intense thought seized her, which he could not at all comprehend; and though she declared she was better, and rose from her bed, readjusted her dress, and strove to appear as ordinary, her manner was so different from that of the frank, straight-forward, warm-hearted Margaret Graham, that her husband was pained as well as alarmed. She was cold, absent, thoughtful, and sometimes she gazed at him with eyes full of tenderness and affection, sometimes seemed to shrink from him with a chilly shudder. Then she would fall into reveries so profound, that he would speak without her hearing him, and start when he repeated his words, as if caught in some guilty act. The conflict in her breast was terrible during all that live-long day and the night that followed. Sometimes the emotions of different kinds would come upon her all at once, sometimes present themselves singly. Now love would be triumphant, and she would say to herself that it was impossible he could be guilty; such deeds were not in his nature; and she would resolve to tell him all; but then again she would recollect that he had told her the news of her marriage to another had well-nigh driven him mad—that it had changed his nature and his character—that for some time he had hardly known what he did. She would ask herself, if she did tell him, and the dreadful suspicion should prove true, what was to follow then? It had well-nigh turned her brain; but still she paused and pondered, weighing all the circumstances, thinking over all the events, and still she found fearful evidence, against which she had nothing to oppose but love and love's confidence. At one moment she thought that anything would be better than such terrible doubt, and she determined

boldly to speak; but then her courage failed her. She felt she dared not; it seemed as if the first words might blast all her happiness for ever. It was plucking the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the taste of which would bring death into the Eden of her love. She thought what would be her feelings if he hesitated, if he faltered, if all could not be explained clearly; of what must be her conduct if her dreadful doubts were confirmed —of the new struggles that must take place, of the anguish and the fears that would be in store; and she fancied that ignorance—even partial ignorance—were better than more certain knowledge. At length, she resolved to believe him innocent, to forget what she had seen and learned, to trust implicitly that all could be explained. To believe! to forget! to trust! Those are things beyond man's will to accomplish. She felt it; she felt that if she could believe, and forget, and trust, why not speak at once? But her heart failed her, and her mind vacillated between convictions and lines of conduct incompatible with one another. No sleep visited her eyes that night, and she rose pale and wan, and still sad and thoughtful. Fairfax sent for a physician; but what could the man of healing do? He felt her pulse; he declared her somewhat hysterical; he could see nothing more. He ordered her some insignificant draught; he could do nothing less. Fairfax questioned the servants as to whether anything had occurred to agitate or alarm their mistress during his absence. They knew of nothing. He questioned Margaret herself, and she burst into tears, but did not answer. The tone of her mind was shaken with the struggle. The natural frankness of her character was overawed by a great terror, and though now she longed to speak, she could not.

Fairfax was puzzled, grieved, alarmed, somewhat offended. Another day passed, and another. The physician saw her twice, and hinted that there was no disease—that there must be something mental. Fairfax tried to sooth; but the delay had rendered

that conduct still more difficult, which she had at first shrunk from, and had given suspicion stronger hold upon her mind. The facts had arranged themselves more clearly. Two articles of the dead man's property seemed clearly traced to her husband's possession. He had suddenly, as he acknowledged, become possessed of a sum of money, which she knew must have been about the amount on the murdered man's person; he must have been near the spot at the time; he never explained how he had obtained that sum; he studiously avoided naming the dead. She tried hard not to believe it, not to doubt, not to suspect, but still she could not avoid a sensation of shrinking fear when he touched her.

Fairfax perceived it, and his spirit took fire. His brain, too, seemed to give way. He grew cold, and haughty, and stern. He called Margaret—his Margaret—"Madam;" and at length, on the morning of the fifth day, he started at daybreak from the bed which had become a place of torture for him, and which Margaret had bedewed with her tears; and telling his servant that he should most likely not return all day, he went forth and took his way in search of utter solitude towards the moors.

PART THE FOURTH.

THE CLEARING OF THE DAY.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DISCOVERY.

It was a clear, fresh morning, in the very infancy of autumn; the air was cool and free, the sky chequered with passing clouds. Fairfax took off his hat to let the wind come freely upon his burning brow. It seemed to revive him, to calm his thoughts, and they arranged themselves into more regular trains as he walked on and began to climb the hill. "There is something dark and mysterious under this," he said to himself. "What can it be? To suppose her guilty of any evil act, of any deceit whatever, is out of the question—and yet this is very strange. What have I done to alienate her affection—and so suddenly, too? In a moment—in one brief moment—in the midst of our greatest love and happiness, to see so complete and terrible a change, is, indeed, beyond all explanation. But it cannot be endured longer—her affection is gone—her confidence. She shrinks from me, she does not trust me. We must part;" and Fairfax set his teeth hard, and mourned over broken hopes. "We must part," he repeated, "after so brief a period of happiness, after such a short dream of passionate love, we must part! I shall love her ever still; but she shall shrink from me no more. She shall no longer tremble at the approach of the husband of her choice. Oh! God, this is very hard to bear."

He went on climbing the moor by the narrow path which had been followed by poor old Doctor Kenmore on the night of his murder. He did not absolutely gaze over the scene around, for he was far too busy with the internal world; but still beautiful nature has her influence, like the spell of music, which lulls, even when we listen not, and hear un-

willingly. The wide, free landscape, the moor all purple with the heath, the long lines of light and shade, the blue airy tint that spread over the whole, the flitting shadows as they wandered across before his unobservant eye, the fresh free air, were impressive of calmness and of gentleness. All that was harsh in his thoughts was softened by God's beautiful creation; a holier and more benevolent spirit seemed to pervade the atmosphere than in any dwelling made with hands, and when he had nearly reached the top of the ascent, he paused, and sat himself down on a boundary stone marking the separation of two parishes.

"Poor Margaret," he said; "I will make one more effort. She suffers, I am sure. I will try once more."

By a strange coincidence, he had seated himself within a yard or two of the very spot where the body of Doctor Kenmore had been found. His back was turned towards the ruined cottage or hut which I have mentioned, and his face towards Allenchurch and Brownswick. All was still and silent; the grasshopper was heard, but that was all. A crow winged its slow flight along, but nought else was seen to stir in the wide air; and on earth the only moving thing was a wreath of blue smoke, which rose up from a cottage chimney down far below, and curled slowly up till it had passed the line of the hill and caught the fresh breeze.

One could have heard the tread of a beetle, and Fairfax distinguished the fall of a footstep behind him. It was a dull and heavy step, like that of a peasant; but he did not wish his thoughts to be disturbed even by a rude "Good morning," and therefore he paid no attention, keeping his eyes fixed in a forward direction over the declivity of the moor. The step came closer and closer, so near that Fairfax thought, "the fellow will run over me," when suddenly he heard a rush and a struggle, and a loud voice exclaim, "Damn thee, wouldst thou kill him as thou killedst the old doctor?" and at the same

moment a large stone flew past him, slightly brushing his shoulder and grazing his cheek.

As may well be supposed, Fairfax started up, and turned round, when he beheld, within two yards of him, the idiot, Tommy Hicks, struggling in the strong grasp of Jacob Halliday.

"On my life and soul, he had nearly done it," said the man, holding him firmly. "I hope he did not hit you, sir. Another minute, and he would have dashed your brains out."

"Many thanks," answered Fairfax; "but this must go on no longer, Halliday. We must tie him. The unhappy creature must be put under restraint. Here, we will tie his arms with my silk handkerchief, and take him down to Brownswick. He should have been confined in some asylum years ago."

"Ay, that he should," said Jacob Halliday, aiding to bind the idiot, which was not done without a tremendous struggle; "I always said so."

"Now his legs," said Fairfax; "his own cravat will do."

"But if we tie his legs, sir, how can he walk to Brownswick?" asked Halliday, naturally enough.

"Do it for the present, at all events," replied Fairfax; "we can loose him a little afterwards." And Jacob did as he was directed.

It was all done very rapidly, although the idiot resisted vehemently, and was very vociferous, shouting out, "I wont be hanged—I wont be hanged, you vermin. There must be a crowner's quest—I wont be hanged."

. Seeing that he was fully impressed with the idea that they were going to hang him, Fairfax assured him, not only that such was not the case, but that nobody was going to hurt him in any way. When he was secured completely, so as to be unable to move hand or foot, Fairfax touched Jacob Halliday's arm, saying, "Come to a little distance. I wish to speak with you for a moment."

"Now they're going to fetch a rope," cried Tommy Hicks. "Oh! I wont be hanged—I wont, I wont;"

and making an effort to run, he fell forward, and there lay howling.

"Now, Halliday," said Fairfax, when they had got about fifty paces distant, "you just now used a very strange, but most important expression, in speaking to that poor wretch. I heard you distinctly say, 'Wouldst thou kill him as thou killedst the old doctor?'"

"I was a fool for my pains, sir," replied the man, looking down, sullenly.

"I think not, Halliday," said Allan Fairfax; "you were acting a good part in saving my life, which was, at all events, in danger, and you gave way to a good and generous impulse in what you said."

"I did save your life, ten chances to one, Sir Allan," answered the man; "for in another minute he would have knocked your brains out with that monstrous big stone; but I was a fool, nevertheless, for saying what I did, for, of course, now you will go and tell all about it; and I shall be forced to speak too, and get myself into trouble."

"For saving my life you shall be well rewarded," replied Fairfax; "and the law of England requires no man to get himself into trouble, as you call it. You can never be called upon to say anything that can injure yourself. I partly divine your objections from what I have heard of your pursuits; but in giving evidence in regard to the horrid deed to which you alluded, no question can be pressed upon you which can at all tend to criminate you. Of this I pledge you my word, and would explain further if I knew the circumstances."

Jacob Halliday rubbed his head. "Well, sir," he said at length, "you did me a kind turn a day or two ago, and I am sure you are a man of honour, and wont repeat a word of what I am going to say without my consent."

"Of that I give you my word," answered Fairfax; "but I tell you fairly, Halliday, I shall give information to the magistrates at once of what you did say to the idiot when you came up, so that an investiga-

tion must take place, and it is much better for you to have good and friendly advice as to what your own course should be during that investigation, than to go to it unprepared, and perhaps commit yourself."

"That's very true, sir," said Jacob Halliday, "very true, indeed; and I have often thought of telling all, too, and should have done it, if it had not been for fear of getting myself into trouble. I should have jumped over that, however, if I had seen any other poor fellow accused; but I thought it was no good, when there was only the idiot to blame, for it was he who did it, and I saw him."

"But let me hear the whole particulars, Halliday," said Fairfax. "You might have placed yourself in very unpleasant circumstances."

"Not I," replied the labourer; "I never touched a penny, and knew nothing about it, but that it was done, and who did it. The way of it was this, sir; and as I am going to tell you everything, I hold you to your honour, that you wont say a word. How the brute is howling; I wish he would hold his tongue."

After this exclamation, he proceeded as follows:—

JACOB HALLIDAY'S TALE.

"You see, sir, I was driven to desperation. There was my wife and my boy to feed and clothe, and not able to do a hand's turn to help. My wages were seven shillings a week, and the rent of my cottage was one and sixpence. I had five and sixpence to keep and cover three persons, and that only as long as I was well and hearty. Ben and I spoke to our master about it, and he treated us like dogs, because he knew we could get no out-door relief from the Union, and that we should do anything rather than be driven into a place which is worse than a prison, have all our little goods sold, and be forced to live separate from our wives and children. One day, however, he was cursing the game which had damaged some of his crops, and said he wondered the labourers who came teasing him about low wages did not help

themselves to victuals, while there was plenty of it running in the fields. So, sir, I took the hint, and turned poacher; but I was not a bit the more obliged to Farmer Stumps, and often thought, and said, too, that he ought to be one of the first to suffer, for driving men to do what was not right, just to pinch something of their pay. Well, sir, about that time, Tommy Hicks went to live with Ben. I had had the offer of him and five shillings a week to keep him; but my wife said she'd never eat a morsel after he came into the house, and I had a great hatred to the lump too. However, at Ben's I saw him very often, and he somehow took a great fancy to me, and found out what I was about with the game, for though he is born a natural, he is as cunning as the devil; and he used to come out and help me, and wonderful how sharp he was at it. I have often thought he must be a bit of a beast himself, he knew all their ways so well. Then came that business of the fire in Farmer Stumps's rickyard; and I know they always suspected I did it. I did not, however, I give you my word, though I knew it was going to be done; that I don't deny. But I was very sure that, with one thing or another, it would go hard with me if I was caught poaching. I did not leave off for all that, notwithstanding, and though it was a bad time of year, I used to go out to keep the pot boiling, and especially used to pick up a good deal round about that old tumbled-down hut there, for it is a regular walk for all sorts of game from the great west coppice, where there is such a deal, down to Pemberton's farm fields in the hollow. Well, one night, when poor Ben was so ill, I came down here and set all my traps and things, and got into the hut to watch what would come of it, and a few minutes after Tommy came down and joined me; and a curious way he was in that night to be sure—madder than ever, if possible; for something had gone wrong with him up at Ben's, and he kept muttering, and cursing, and laughing, till he half frightened even me. I could hardly keep him quiet. At last we heard a gulp and a flapping,

and I knew it was an old cock pheasant had got his neck in a noose, which I had stuck between two bushes just in his walk, and I ran and got him out in a great hurry, for I was not likely to get many, and this was a wonderful chance, for it was after roosting time. I found afterwards that he had a lame wing, which was the reason he kept walking so late. I should have told you the moon was shining very clear; and when I had got my bird, I happened to look up to the eastward there, and saw a man coming down the path. So I crept back to the hut upon my hands and knees. But when I got back, Tommy Hicks was not there. There was never any knowing what he would do the next minute; and I was resolved to look after him as soon as the man was past, for I thought he would spoil the sport. Looking out through the chink of the door, I soon saw that the person who was coming was good old Doctor Kenmore; but I took no notice, thinking he would soon go by, and then I could look after the Natural; but just when he got to those tall bushes that you see there, up jumped Tommy Hicks from behind them, and hit him a great blow on the back of the head with a stone as big as a gallon loaf; and down fell the poor old gentleman, just like an ox in the shambles. I ran out as hard as I could, and caught hold of the devil just as he had got the stone up to hit him again. There were plenty of hard words between us, as you may think, and I had a great mind to have dashed his brains out for him, for he answered, just like a fool as he is, that he had a right to hit the doctor, because the doctor had hit him; and I could not find in my heart to hurt the Natural. When I looked at the poor old man I found he was quite dead. There was no breath in him at all, and I felt so sick at my heart, I did not know what to do. Tommy Hicks had sneaked a bit away by this time, and after standing and looking for I dare say five minutes, I heard some people talking at a distance, and thought the best that I could do was to run home as fast as possible. I said to myself, I could

think over it till to-morrow, as to what I should do about telling; and a terrible night I had of it to be sure. But when the morning came, I fancied there would be no use of telling of the idiot, unless somebody else was accused, and I said to myself too, 'if you do tell, they will ask you what you were doing down there at the hut, and you'll get into trouble,' and so I held my tongue till this blessed day."

"But I have heard he was robbed as well as murdered," said Fairfax, "and a large sum of money taken from his person."

"And so he was, sir," answered Jacob Halliday, "but it was all the idiot's doing, for he is desperate cute after what he calls property; and it would be a good thing if one could get him to tell where he put it all. I have asked him more than once; but I never could get at it, for he is as cunning as a magpie, and hides away things in all sorts of holes: and now, sir, I should be glad to know what I had best do?"

"There seems to me, Halliday, only one thing for you to do; namely, to go down with me to the magistrates at once. I shall give information of the attack the idiot made upon me, and relate how you interfered to save me, as well as the words that you spoke to the idiot when you ran up. You must then give your evidence in regard to the old man's death. If asked what you were doing at the hut, you can refuse to answer. They have no power to compel you; and, perhaps, by the information which you can give, we may be able to discover some of the articles which were taken from the person of the dead man, so as to fix the crime more fully upon Hicks, than your unsupported testimony can do."

"But if we don't, do you think, sir, they'll suspect me?" asked Jacob Halliday, musing.

"I think not," answered Fairfax; "for your very exclamation, in coming up to my assistance, is presumptive proof that you had no share in the deed yourself."

"So it is, sir," replied Halliday; "at least, it ought to be."

"And it will be," said Fairfax; "but you cannot help seeing the affair must now be investigated thoroughly; .and depend upon it, the only way to escape suspicion yourself, is to give every information it is in your power to afford, without, of course, doing anything to criminate yourself. We shall have some trouble to get him down to Brownswick, I am afraid, but we can obtain assistance at Allenchurch.

"Oh, ay, we can get a cart, sir," replied Jacob Halliday, who seemed satisfied with his companion's reasoning; "and, indeed, it is high time that Master Tommy was shut up, for he'll do more mischief if we don't mind."

"He has done too much already," said Fairfax, "in truth, the ways of Heaven are strange and wonderful. How many destinies haye been affected by the acts of one miserable lunatic!"

He knew not yet how far his own fate and happiness had been affected.

The young baronet's expectations were fulfilled to the utmost in regard to the difficulties of getting the idiot down to Brownswick. He resisted, he refused to walk, he threw himself down upon the ground, he bit with his teeth like a wild beast when any one strove to raise him, and it was not till the assistance of two more strong men had been obtained that he could be forced on as far as Allenchurch. There, however, a light cart was procured, and Tommy Hicks being placed therein, the rest of the way was easily performed. Much was the wonder and admiration of the townspeople to see the well-known idiot brought into the place in a cart, bound hand and foot, and Sir Allan Fairfax following, with a fresh scar upon the side of his face. A crowd gathered as the vehicle proceeded, which had swelled to many hundreds by the time it reached the door of the Town Hall. Many, too, were the questions asked, but the only reply obtained was, that Tommy Hicks had attempted to dash out Fairfax's brains with a large stone, and in the midst of a good deal of noise and confusion, he was carried out, resisting, as far as he could, and borne

up to a room adjoining that where the magistrates usually assembled. But what took place in the justice-room must have a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MURDER OUT.

"PRAY, what magistrates are assembled?" asked Allan Fairfax of the constable whom he found in the hall.

"Sir Stephen Grizley and Mr. Hankum, sir," replied the other; "they are waiting for Mr. Greensides."

"Then be so good as to inform them that I wish to speak with them directly," said Fairfax, and in another minute he was ushered into the presence of the two justices. Both greeted him warmly, and expressed their regret to hear that Lady Fairfax was unwell; but the young baronet, with a somewhat cloudy brow, brought that part of the subject to a speedy close, and then proceeded to say, "I have come, gentlemen, to lay a charge of assault against a madman in this neighbourhood, who has attempted to dash my brains out with a stone. He is a very dangerous person; and I must say that I think it extraordinary he has been suffered to wander about the country so long."

"Oh, my dear Sir Allan," replied the chairman, interrupting him before he had quite done, with a low laugh, "you know every country town must have one fool, at least, at liberty. Now, the people of Brownswick are all so wise, that we could not find a more inoffensive one on whom to bestow the freedom of our city. But, to be serious, the matter should have been taken up before, and shall be now."

"I am afraid that the fact of its not having been taken up before," answered Allan Fairfax, "has led

to a catastrophe of a very painful kind. I really am not aware of the formal mode of proceeding; but I have information to give, which can afterwards be reduced to proper shape, and which may tend, I trust, to bring to light the facts connected with the violent death of a gentleman in this town about two years and a half ago."

Fairfax spoke upon the subject in a stiff and hesitating manner, which showed the pain that it still gave him to refer to one who had once, for a few short hours, called Margaret Graham his wife; but the magistrates with their curiosity suddenly awakened paid no attention to the mode of the intelligence, and instantly overwhelmed him with questions. He replied succinctly, stating what had occurred to him on the moor, and the words which Jacob Halliday had uttered.

"I am inclined to believe," he said, "that Halliday is willing to give his evidence without prevarication or disguise. What he told me, I cannot, of course, repeat, nor would it be of any benefit to do so; but I am sure that if questioned he will throw light upon an event which has hitherto remained in darkness. I believe also that it will not be found impossible, with judicious treatment, to gain perhaps from the unhappy idiot himself some clue to the property which was upon the person of the deceased gentleman, or at all events to obtain more substantial proofs of the facts than the mere testimony of one witness of no very good repute."

"Leave him to me—leave him to me," said Sir Stephen Grizley; "I am accustomed to deal with my friend Tommy, and I will get the truth out of him by one means or another; but we will hear Halliday's statement first. He's a terrible fellow after hares and rabbits, but not so bad a man as he is called. Poor Tommy, it seems, is somewhat worse than he was said to be; and now, gentlemen, you must not object to my proceeding a little informally with Master Hicks, for, you see, madmen are no formalists, and we must humour them a little.—Ah, here comes Mr.

Greensides.—Constable, bring in Tommy Hicks and Jacob Halliday, and while we take down Sir Allan's information, you may just as well amuse our friend Tom in the corner with anything you can get hold of."

"He's awful uproarious, your worship," said the constable.

"The more reason for putting him into a good humour," replied Sir Stephen. "Show him my stick with the head carved upon it, and ask him if it is not like its master. You need not lock the doors, you know—that would look bad; but you can keep the good people out by telling them to call another day."

While the prisoner and his accuser were being brought in, the case was explained to the other worthy magistrate, who had just entered, Fairfax's information was taken, and the court constituted itself, the young baronet seating himself at the corner of the table. Tommy Hicks was carried in, screaming; but the constable did not try his powers upon him in vain; and while Halliday was brought forward, the fury of the other gradually subsided into a wild and incoherent conversation with the officer and other men who were admitted to restrain him in case of need; and at the end of about ten minutes he was heard laughing aloud.

In the meantime, Halliday made his deposition without varying from his statement to Fairfax in the slightest particular. He omitted, it is true, all mention of the motives which had led him to the ruinous hut upon the moor, and when Mr. Hankum asked him what took him there, he replied—

"I thought I was not to be asked that question."

"You are not to answer it unless you like," replied Sir Stephen Grizley; "there is a very great difference, Jacob, between magistrates being permitted to ask questions and witnesses being obliged to answer them."

"Well, then, please your worship, I would rather not," said Halliday, with a low bow to Mr. Hankum.

"The court is at liberty to guess, Jacob," said Sir Stephen, winking at him; "and we have no great difficulty in the present case. But now tell me,—what became of all the money and other articles that were upon the person of poor old Doctor Kenmore at the time of the murder?—Clerk, have you got a copy of the evidence before the coroner?"

"Yes, your worship," replied the clerk, and went to fetch it, while Halliday answered for his part,—

"I don't know, sir. I never saw any of them but once, and then I caught Tommy looking at the head of a stick, which I could swear was the poor old gentleman's. He ran away as soon as he saw I was watching him, and went into Mrs. Grimsditche's cottage, where he lives now since he left my cousin Ben. I should not wonder if it was hid somewhere thereabouts."

"Can you give us a notion of where?" asked the magistrate. "Do you know the cottage well?"

"Can't say I do," answered Jacob Halliday; "I haven't been in it for these ten years, because, you see, your worship, she's my wife's aunt, and we've quarrelled."

"An excellent reason," replied Sir Stephen; "and you positively know nothing of the rest of the property?"

"Nothing at all," answered Halliday.

"Then you may fall back a little," said the magistrate; "but wait there, for you will have to sign your deposition, and we may want to ask some more questions. We must have the cottage searched."

Halliday then retired from the room, not feeling quite comfortable; for there was a consciousness that some suspicion attached to himself which he could not shake off, and he would have given two or three fingers of his right hand to know that something would occur to fix the guilt more distinctly upon Tommy Hicks.

"Now tell my friend Tommy," said Sir Stephen Grizley, as soon as the other was gone, "that I want to speak a word to him about the cane."

The idiot had by this time quite forgotten his terrors, and walked forward to the table without hesitation on hearing the magistrate's message exactly in his own words.

"Ah, Tommy, how do you do?" said Sir Stephen; "take a seat, Tommy. Give Mr. Hicks a chair; and let us look at the cane. Now, Tommy, did you ever see a prettier head to a cane than that? See what a great nose there is. Now, tell me, if I had a mind to change, would you give me the head of old Doctor Kenmore's cane for that?"

Tommy Hicks laughed, but he replied, "No, no!" with a sapient shake of the head. That was something gained, for it seemed like an admission that he had it to give. His next auswer, however, destroyed that impression.

"And why not, Tommy?" asked the magistrate.

"Because his was all gold, and that's nothing but wood," replied Tommy Hicks; "I've seen his a many times."

"But suppose I cover that all with gold, nose and all," said the persevering magistrate.

The idiot's eyes twinkled, but still he was too cunning for the snare; and he answered,—

"No, no, that wont do."

"And why not?" asked Sir Stephen. "I want that head of a stick very much, and you can do nothing with it."

"Oh yes I can," cried Tommy Hicks, thrown off his guard; "but what do you want it for?"

"I want everything of old Doctor Kenmore's that I can get," replied Sir Stephen, apparently not noticing the former part of this reply—"just out of spite, Tommy. I want to know what became of them all, and I'll give any man who tells me something very nice."

At the same time he beckoned to the constable, who came up, and a whispered conversation took place between the magistrate and the officer, which seemed to excite some uneasiness in the idiot, for he moved to and fro on his chair, and at length exclaimed,—

"What is all that about?"

"Nothing to you, Tommy," replied Sir Stephen; "only I am going to give these gentlemen some marmalade."

"Orange marmalade?" asked Tommy Hicks, with a very voracious expression of countenance.

"Yes," said Sir Stephen; "do you like it?—bring some, constable. Now, I'll tell you what, Tommy, I'll give you a whole pound of the most delicious orange marmalade, if you tell me where you put all the things that were about the old doctor when you spited him on the moor."

But the idiot only shook his head, and remained firm, till the constable returned with an immense large jar of sweetmeat, and Sir Stephen, dipping in a spoon, put some out on a plate, and sent it to Mr. Greensides.

"I'll tell," cried Tommy Hicks, at the sight of a temptation to him irresistible. "I'll tell, if you promise not to hang me—for Jacob Halliday always says I ought to be hanged."

"Oh dear, no," replied Sir Stephen; "Jacob's a fool. We'll not hang you at all, Tommy."

"Nor put me in the stocks, as old Jenkins did?" asked Tommy Hicks.

"No, nor put you in the stocks," replied the magistrate; and, at the same time, he dipped the spoon in the jar again.

"I'll tell!" cried the idiot. Give it to me."

"No, no, Tommy. Tell first, and feast after," said Sir Stephen; but seeing a dull shade come over the unhappy man's face, he added, quickly, "I'll give you a taste, just to get your tongue in order. Take him that spoonful, constable."

The order was immediately obeyed, but the quantity given was skilfully apportioned to stimulate rather than appease appetite; and after Tommy Hicks had swallowed the whole at one large mouthful he cried,—

"Now, I'll tell. But you'll give me the whole pot?"

"The whole," replied Sir Stephen. "Nobody else

shall have a spoonful, unless you stop answering; then I'll give some to one, and some to another, till it is all gone. Now, tell me, Tommy, like a man, where did you put the notes and money?"

"The yellow ones in the thatch of Ben's cottage, and the silver in my pouch," replied Tommy Hicks; the yellow's there now. I counted it by the 'moon t'other night."

The magistrate looked at the notes of the coroner's inquest, and asked,—"The head of the stick, what did you do with that?"

"It's at mother Grimsditche's," said the idiot, "in a hole by the pig-stye. Ay, that is what you are wanting, I know well enough."

"And the buckles out of his shoes?" asked the magistrate.

But Tommy Hicks did not answer for a minute, leering at Fairfax with a sinister, sneering expression, by no means benevolent. Sir Stephen put the spoon in the jar again, and the idiot exclaimed, eagerly, pointing to the young baronet,—

"I poked them into his leather box through the chink, and then he came and took it away, and stole my buckles."

Fairfax had usually a good deal of command over himself, except where there was an immediate wound inflicted upon those prejudices, or long-nourished and morbidly acute sensations, of which most men have some; but now he started up off his chair, exclaiming,—

"Good Heavens!"

He sat down again the next instant; and Sir Stephen, without noticing the little incident, went on with his examination of the idiot.

"Let me see. His watch; did you take his watch?"

"No, no," answered Tommy Hicks, with a wonderfully cunning look. I knew better than that. A watch talks. It goes tick, tick, tick. I will have no talking things."

"Thank you, Tommy, thank you," said the magistrate. "I think that will do. You may give him the

pot, constable — but stay; did you take anything else?"

"Nothing but the big key," replied the idiot; and that I dropped down on Ben's floor that night; and when I saw it in Bella's hands the next day, I would not ask for it, because Jacob had said I should be hanged if it was found out how I had spited the old doctor. Ay, he hit me with a stick, and I hit him with a stone, and that is all fair."

"Give him the pot," said Sir Stephen. "I think we must commit him for trial, gentlemen; but, by your leave, we will say nothing about the marmalade."

"Without which we should have done no good," said Mr. Hankum.

"The great moving powers are rarely seen," replied the knight in the chair, who was at bottom a man of sense; "but it is not only that: a scribe shows his good discretion always in omitting everything that does not give dignity to his narration. Everything important in the world has something ludicrous in it —its marmalade, in fact; but history suppresses the ludicrous, and we will suppress the marmalade, lest some foolish writer should get hold of the record, Mr. Greensides, and hold us up to posterity as 'The Marmalade Magistrates.' And now we want but one more testimony. Make out the warrant, Mr. Clerk. May I ask Sir Allan Fairfax if he can confirm this poor creature's statement regarding the buckles?"

"So far as having found a pair of large silver buckles which I had no knowledge of," replied Fairfax, "I can fully. I had left my portmanteau at Ben Halliday's cottage for several days, and just as I was on the eve of sailing for India, I called and took it away. I did not open it for some time, for I had things more fitted for sea; but when I did, I found the buckles. I put them in my writing-desk, and have them now; for I felt a curiosity to know how they came where I found them."

"Pray, were you aware of Doctor Kenmore's death, Sir Allan, at the time you took the portmanteau away?" demanded Mr. Greensides.

"Certainly not," answered Fairfax, with the blood glowing warm in his cheek, from sensations difficult to define. "I never heard of his death till I returned to England, not four months ago."

"Or perhaps he would not have taken away the portmanteau at all," whispered Sir Stephen to Mr. Hankum. "I think he ought to give the idiot something handsome; but we must give him room in the gaol.—Is the warrant ready? Now, Tommy, as a further reward for having told the whole truth, I have to tell you that you shall be removed from Mrs. Grimsditche's, which I know you hate, to a fine airy room in Brownswick, and be lodged, boarded, and clothed by your grateful country."

"Perhaps with a hempen cravat," whispered Mr. Greensides.

"Oh dear, no," answered the worthy chairman; "every sort of folly is punished in England except the greatest. Tommy Hicks's wisdom is too well known for him to run any risk."

The warrant was placed before the chairman and signed, and Tommy Hicks was quietly removed from the justice-room, eating his marmalade all the way. Jacob Halliday was then recalled, to sign his deposition, and an immediate search was ordered for the stolen property in the places which the idiot had indicated.

"I will send down the buckles immediately," said Sir Allan Fairfax, as he rose to depart; "if you are not sitting, I suppose my servant had better deliver them to the clerk?"

"To-morrow will be quite time enough," said Sir Stephen, "for I think we shall rise directly. Indeed, we might sit as long as a hen without hatching such a brood as has come forth to day. We are really much obliged to you, Sir Allan, for having brought this dark affair to light. There can be nothing more disagreeable, I may say painful, in a little neighbourhood like this, than to have suspicions continually hovering about, like dark clouds, overshadowing from time to time very good sorts of people."

Fairfax cordially agreed with him, and went away musing. By some link, he did not clearly see what, the events which had just been brought to light connected themselves with the unhappy change which had taken place in his domestic life. He asked himself if Margaret could have seen the buckles in his desk, for he recollected that the alteration in her whole demeanour was dated from that day when he had sent her the key. But then he asked himself again, and the questions were most painful—"Could Margaret Graham have examined other parts of the desk besides that to which he had directed her attention? Even if she had, and had found the buckles there, and had recognised them, was it like her to suspect her husband—him whom she professed to love and honour above all men—from an accidental circumstance like that?" Thus he proceeded to reason, without knowing all the facts—a course which men are sometimes obliged to pursue, but which they do pursue much more frequently than is needful—and thus he went on torturing his own heart with inquiries which he could not answer. Nevertheless—for Fairfax's character was a peculiar one in some respects—he drew a degree of relief from supposing an explanation of Margaret's conduct. That it should have a cause, though an insufficient one, was some comfort, and he said to himself, as he entered the garden-gate—

"We must have a full explanation: frankness on both parts is the only thing which can save us from misery. I shall soon know whether I am to be wretched or happy for life. Where is your mistress?" he demanded of the servant, whom he found in the hall.

"She is in the back drawing-room, sir," replied the man, "and she told me to tell you that she wished to see you, as soon as you came in."

"Very well," cried Fairfax, and walked on.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DOUBTS REMOVED.

With heavy heart, and aching head, and languid eyes, Margaret rose from her bed not long after Fairfax had left her. She dressed herself slowly, speaking not one word to her maid during the whole time she was arranging her beautiful hair, and then descended to the breakfast-room; she rang the bell, and proceeded mechanically to the ordinary task of the morning.

"Let Sir Allan know that breakfast is ready," she said to the servant, and was falling into a fit of thought again, when the man's reply instantly roused her.

"Sir Allan is out, my lady," he replied, "and he said he should not be back till night."

"Not back till night!" exclaimed Margaret. "Do you know where he is gone to?"

"No, my lady," answered the man; "he went out on foot." And as Margaret said nothing more he quitted the room.

"What am I doing?" thought Margaret—"what have I done? His affection is estranged. I can see it in his eyes, in his every look, in his whole manner, and I love him so fondly still. For the first time in my life I have wanted confidence and frankness towards a being whom I love; and how terrible is the consequence! Oh, God! what shall I do? I will tell him all. Let me consider—let me try if my brain has any power left—let me take some resolution and keep it firmly. Is it possible that Allan Fairfax could commit such an act? that any provocation, any temptation could induce him to injure a poor old man like that? What! gallant, and noble, and kind, and generous as he is, that he should do such a thing for

any consideration on earth! Oh, no, no, no!—but yet the proofs—but I will not think of them. It is impossible. I have done him injustice, and now I must do right. I will tell him all; I will humble myself before him; I will sue for pardon on my knees, and beseech him not to take his love from me because I have been weak enough, mad enough to suspect him—there, there, I will think of it no more. I will have no more casuistry! I will tell him all, and till I have done so I will not ask my heart another question."

She became calmer upon this resolution; she tried to take some breakfast; she attempted to read; she was anxious, in short, to fill up the time in any way, lest her mind should revert, against her will, to things she was resolved not to think upon. "It will seem dreadfully long till he returns," she said to herself; "he will not return till night! Good Heaven! if he should never return! But I must not think of that either, or I shall die;" and she gasped for breath.

Shortly after she rang the bell, and bade the servant who appeared to tell his master as soon as he returned that she wished to see him immediately. Then going into the back drawing-room, where her little store of books was collected, she took several down, one after another, and looked at their pages, but hardly saw their contents. Often, during the next two hours, she took out her watch to see how the time went, and thought the day would never pass. Eleven—twelve—half-past twelve came, and she said, "Thank Heaven, it is half over. Hark! That is his step on the gravel—he has come back sooner. He has not quite cast off his poor Margaret." But though that thought was like a ray of hope, she nevertheless trembled violently.

She heard his step a minute after in the hall; she heard the servant deliver her message, and she struggled for calmness. She had resolved what she should do, and her only fear was, that the swimming brain, and shaking limbs, and failing breath would render it impossible to do it.

Fairfax entered the room with a quick step, and eyes turned towards her with a look of some anxiety. That very anxiety spoke love still unextinguished; it comforted, it strengthened her. She rose from her chair, steadied her steps by the table as he approached, and then taking a step or two forward, sank slowly on her knees, clasping his hand in hers. "Forgive me, Allan," she said, "forgive me. I have made you unhappy. I have acted wrong towards you—I have wanted confidence—I have doubted and hesitated foolishly and madly. Forgive me, forgive your Margaret, and do not—do not take your love from me."

He raised her in his arms; he pressed his lips upon hers; he held her to his heart, and answered, "Anything, Margaret, if you love me."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, Allan," she said; "yet hear me; let me tell all while I have strength and resolution, and then, pitying me for my weakness, and for all I have suffered during the last five terrible days, forgive your poor Margaret, though you may indignantly call her mad for having entertained the thoughts which have driven her nearly so. You will hear me, Fairfax, to an end, is it not so? You will let me tell all, without asking a question till it is done, lest my powers fail me; and then you will forgive me all, Allan."

"But put confidence in me, dear girl," he answered, soothing her, "and I can forgive almost anything."

"Ay, there is my fault," said Margaret, with the tears in her eyes; "I wanted confidence—for the first time in my life, I dared not speak my thoughts—and that to the only man I ever loved in life. But now I will atone—I will tell you all; but first think of the punishment I have suffered—think of the torture of the last five days, and let pity plead for me. Now I will tell you."

"Nay, sit beside me here," said Fairfax; "you tremble, my love."

"I would fain kneel and tell it at your feet," said Margaret, "for as I come near the tale I feel how

wrong it has been ever to doubt you, and I dread that I may not be able to make you comprehend my sensations clearly—to tell you how I longed to speak, yet was withheld by a thousand painful dreads."

"Calm yourself, my Margaret, calm yourself," said Fairfax, tenderly. "Speak candidly; for you cannot think, I do believe, that I have ever wanted kindness or gentleness. Yet first let me thank you for having sought this explanation first, without leaving me to ask it, as I should have done this day. And now, my love, tell me all."

"I will, I will," she answered; "and yet, Allan, I must at the very first speak upon a subject which I know is disagreeable to you. You have always avoided it with me, and with others. Some have even been bold enough to remark upon your studious avoidance of one name, and one person, in your conversation, and it has struck me as strange, for you cannot, my dear husband, surely feel aught like jealousy on the score of the past. You must know, you must feel, that I have never loved any one but you—that I am yours—ever have been altogether from the first."

"I will own it," answered Fairfax; "I am jealous that any one should have called you his own for an hour. I know you are mine, Margaret—mine only; but yet—would you had never borne another name but Margaret Graham and Margaret Fairfax. But it is very foolish—I have been very foolish; I will be so no more. Speak, love; I will not shrink from the topic now. What more?"

"You remember, Allan," she continued, sitting with her hand in his, "that one day at the beginning of this week, you sent the key of your writing-desk to me for papers. Well, I found them at once, as soon as I could open the desk, for that is difficult to do."

"I know it," replied Fairfax, "I should have thought of that."

"I gave them to William," Margaret continued, "and then returned to lock the desk. I give you my

word, dear Allan, I looked no further. I should have hated myself if I had even felt a curiosity; but somehow, in trying various ways to open the desk, I had pulled it partly off the table, and in shutting it I pressed it down."

"I understand," said her husband; "it fell."

"Yes," replied Margaret, "and in so doing, a secret drawer came open, where I saw——"

"A pair of silver buckles," answered Fairfax, firmly, "which had belonged to poor Kenmore. I know it."

"Thank God!" murmured Margaret, in a low tone, as she heard him pronounce the name so calmly; but she added aloud, "Which were on his person when he left me on the evening of that fatal marriage day, which are even now marked with his blood."

"Ay? I did not remark that," answered Fairfax; "but surely, Margaret, that could not——"

"Hear me, Allan—hear me out," she said. "My first sensation was horror at a sight which recalled suddenly the terrible deed that had been done. I gathered up the papers hastily, replaced them, and closed the desk. Then came the question, suddenly, how came those buckles there? A confused crowd of images, all terrible, rushed upon me. It seemed as if some one accused you; and I felt as indignant as if the charge were against myself; a demon seemed to recall all that was terrible; your avoidance of his name—your having been in the neighbourhood at the time—your having suddenly received a sum of money to the same amount that was upon his person, which you said you would not explain; all came whirling through my brain in a moment. I felt sick and giddy, and I fainted."

"Suspicion—oh, what a dreadful thing is suspicion!" said Fairfax.

"Most dreadful," answered Margaret; "but do not suppose I gave way to it. When I had recovered, even as I was recovering, I strove to cast it from me. I called it a folly, a madness; but yet it presented itself in various forms—I knew that you were warm

in temper—I knew that you had even then loved me but too well for your own happiness—you had told me that the news of my marriage had almost driven you mad—that you knew not at the time what you did. I thought you might have met—a quarrel and a chance blow might have occurred—I know not what I did not fancy, or what I did not struggle against."

"I see it all, my poor Margaret," said Fairfax.

"No, not all," said Margaret; "hear me yet a moment. One of those who had found me lying on the floor was poor Ben Halliday, who came to speak with me on some business, they said; and as soon as I had somewhat recovered, I resolved to hear what he wanted, in the hope of driving such terrible thoughts from my mind. I forget what he first spoke of, but when that was done, he told me that he wanted to see you, for that two years and a half ago—and he indicated the very day with dreadful exactness—you had come to his cottage in the gray of the morning, and had dropped a key, which he wished to return. He showed me the key, Allan. It is the key of an iron chest let into the wall in the poor old man's house in Brownswick. He had shown it to me that very day he died. He had it with him when he was killed. Here it is; for I snatched it from him in terror, lest it should be shown against you; and then I fainted again."

Fairfax pressed her to his bosom. "You have had enough to wring your heart, indeed, my Margaret," he said; "but why did you not tell me all this at once?"

"I was wrong," she answered; "but oh, Fairfax, what had I not to dread if I spoke all my feelings. I had to come upon a subject you abhorred: if you explained all, you would hate me for my doubts—if you did not explain all, what would those doubts become? I feared to lose you any way, and I hesitated and trembled and retired into myself, and felt that I was weak, yet could not conquer my weakness—knew you were innocent, yet had doubts still ringing in my

ears—I was wrong, very wrong, Allan; but oh, if you could tell how I have suffered, what anguish I have endured, day by day, and night after night, you would pity and forgive me.—Oh, forgive me, Allan, forgive me!"

"I do, my Margaret;—nay, I think you well-nigh justified for all but not confiding everything to me at once," Fairfax answered, tenderly; "even for that, there is much excuse. But never, Margaret, doubt me again, never withhold your confidence from me on any account. And now, thank God, I can explain all, though yesterday I could not have done so."

"Yet a word more," said Margaret; "I want no explanation, Fairfax. Last night you were angry with me, I could see; this morning you left me, saying that you would not return till night. I saw that your love was passing away from me. I felt it was my own fault. I sat down and struggled with myself, and I conquered. I felt that no guilt could attach to Allan Fairfax; that whatever were the circumstances, I ought to believe nought against him. Nay, I did really believe nought against him, and I resolved at any cost to tell you, and crave forgiveness. I have accomplished the task, and in doing so have freed my bosom from a serpent that shall never enter it again. I ask no explanation. If all the world were to call you guilty, I would not believe it."

"Yet you must hear the whole, love," Fairfax replied. "This key I never saw before to-day; the good man made a mistake. It was dropped in his cottage by the same person who placed those buckles in a portmanteau I had left there—in a word, Margaret, by the murderer of poor Doctor Kenmore; I will not call him your husband, for he was not so. And now, Margaret, I have this very day discovered and brought to light who was the assassin—and that, too, strange to say, without ever knowing, till an hour ago, when he confessed the fact, that these buckles had belonged to the good old man he killed."

"Then he has confessed!" cried Margaret, with an

exclamation of joy—"he has confessed! Then there can be no more doubts."

"None," replied Fairfax; "for he has confessed where he hid the property, though not in exact terms acknowledged the deed."

"But how did you discover it?" exclaimed Margaret, "when every inquiry has hitherto been made in vain."

Fairfax smiled faintly. "I made the discovery, my Margaret, by a very singular coincidence," he said, and, at the same time, he put his arm round her, and held her to his heart. "Do you know, love, that at the very moment when I was sitting on the moor, and thinking I could not live without Margaret, but that I would rather die than live without her love, she had nearly lost a second who has called her husband, on the very same spot where the first fell, and by the very same hand."

Margaret turned as pale as marble, and Fairfax clasped her closer to him, saying,—

"Do not agitate yourself, love. You see I am here —safe, unhurt."

"Oh, Fairfax," she answered, in a low and trembling voice, "if you had died then, when I was wringing your heart by injurious doubts and weak hesitations, what would my fate have been?—distraction; it could have been nothing else—or death. Good Heaven, you have a scar on your face, too. He must have struck you. Oh, Allan, Allan!" and she hid her eyes and wept upon his bosom.

"He hurt me hardly at all," replied Fairfax, "for he was seized, at the moment he was about to dash a large stone upon my head, by a poor man, named Jacob Halliday. He then threw it with all his force, but it missed me, merely grazing my cheek."

"The idiot! it was the idiot!" cried Margaret, looking up, and at once reaching the right conclusion from her knowledge of the unhappy man's malicious disposition. "You struck him, Allan, and I have heard before he never forgives a blow. But how did you discover the other crime?"

"I will tell you, dearest," replied her husband; and he proceeded to relate all that had occurred shortly, but with sufficient accuracy to show her that all doubt respecting the murder of the old man was at an end.

"And now," continued Fairfax, "there remains but two things to be explained. The one, I shall perhaps have difficulty in explaining—and yet I know not. Others might not comprehend it, yet you may. The second must, for the present, remain unexplained, perhaps for years—perhaps for ever. But Margaret will not doubt me now——"

"Oh, no, no, never!" she cried; "and do forgive me, Allan—and forget, if possible, that I have ever been so weak, so wrong."

"I will never refer to it again," answered Fairfax, "nor think of it, my love. That is, my thoughts shall never rest upon it for one minute. But to my further explanation. My love for you, Margaret, has been from the first of no ordinary kind. It has been the one passion of my whole life; you, you alone, throughout my existence, have been the single object of my strongest affections. In our union I am as happy as my brightest dreams anticipated; but in almost every sky there is some cloud, be it no bigger than a man's hand—it were not well for us were it otherwise. I feel, and have ever felt, that you should be mine—mine alone."

"And so I am," cried Margaret, "so I have ever been."

"But another has called you his wife," said Fairfax; "another has called you Margaret."

"He did so from my birth, Allan," she replied; "you might as well be jealous of my father."

"It is not jealousy, dear girl," he answered; "but whatever it is, I will banish it; for it has produced evil, and I feel that it is wrong. Yet such have been my feelings, love; and they made the very thought of that sad time hateful to me. I never could bear to speak of you, to think of you but as Margaret Graham—as my Margaret. It was folly, it was a disease,

and cured it must and shall be. But even errors, my Margaret, have sometimes beneficial consequences. Had I not had this fault towards you—and I feel that it is a fault towards you—I might have thought it harder, stranger, that you, so universally frank and candid, should not have trusted at once all your thoughts to him you love."

"Oh, Allan," replied Margaret, "love can be so intense as to become timid; nay, more, I believe in a woman's breast its timidity is in proportion to intensity; but I will promise two things, Fairfax—never again to conceal from you anything I feel or think, and never to refer again to that ill-fated marriage, or to the good old man who proposed it, I believe, solely from charitable and benevolent feelings."

"No, no, Margaret," replied her husband; "to the first promise I will keep you, my love; but with regard to the second, not only do I set you free, but I will speak to you myself of Doctor Kenmore. You conquered yourself, dear girl; an honest frankness and sincerity triumphed in the end over fear, and timidity, and doubts, for which there was a strange and extraordinary cause. I will conquer myself, too; and in the end there shall be nothing not to be spoken of between Margaret and her husband."

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAST MYSTERY.

But little more remains to be told of the history of Margaret Graham, though a word or two of explanation between her husband and herself was left unsaid for two or three years, and, therefore, it should be related at the end of the tale Previously, how-

ever, one or two little circumstances, affecting several persons mentioned in this history, had better be noticed.

The personage who acted so conspicuous a part in all the events related—I mean Tommy Hicks, the idiot—was brought to trial for the murder of old Doctor Kenmore, and the money, the head of the stick, and all the other articles which he had stolen from the person of the deceased having been discovered by the indications which he gave, and the state of his mind having been clearly proved, it was not difficult to come to a decision as to what was to be done with him. He was consigned for life to an asylum, where he is deprived of the power of doing further mischief; and, in short, as so frequently happens in England, that was done at last which should have been done at first. One or two circumstances came out at the trial, which gave cause to suspect, and, perhaps, more than suspect, that to the hands of Tommy Hicks was to be attributed the fire in the rick-yard of Farmer Stumps; and with a convenient enlargement of the idea, not unusual in all communities, every one of the numerous fires which had occurred during several preceding years was laid upon the shoulders of him who was known to have been guilty of lighting one.

Jacob Halliday did not altogether escape without suspicion, not of having wilfully prompted the idiot to the act, but of having suggested it by his fierce declamations against the tyranny to which the poor were subject. He had obtained at this time sufficient employment to maintain himself comfortably upon the lands of Lady Fairfax, but Jacob was somewhat of an unsettled disposition; he had heard a great deal of wealth and independence to be obtained in another continent; and having drawn some aid from his cousin Ben, who is now a wealthy and prosperous man, he betook himself to the Land of Liberty and Repudiation. Ben Halliday thrives and prospers; his eldest son gladly quitted the manufacturing districts to regain health, and enjoy tranquillity in

rural occupations. The girl Susan hung between life and death, health and sickness, for several months, but of all the medicines that ever were prescribed, the most efficacious for diseases of the stomach, the heart, and the chest, are prosperity and happiness, and on these she recovered. Charley has grown a fine stout boy, and is already able to assist his father in many things.

There are only two other persons, I believe, except Sir Allan and Lady Fairfax, in whom the reader will take any interest. Sir Stephen Grizley was, at the time we have been speaking of, a widower without children. It is an uncomfortable state, for one misses sadly (to say nothing of more weighty things) all the little pleasures and all the little annoyances of married life. In short, existence becomes a stagnant pond that wants stirring. Sir Stephen resolved to bring a stream of fresh water through it, and to marry again. It was wonderful what an interest he began to take in the arrangements of the Mount Cottage after Miss Harding became its possessor. He offered her a great deal of good advice upon many things, much of which she did not take; and then he offered her his hand, which, after a little consideration, she did take. Though she was past forty, she still retained traces of beauty. Sir Stephen was fifty-two, and had never been pretty; but he was an excellent and amiable man, and though an original in his way, was easy in his temper and gentlemanly in his habits. It was by no means an ill-assorted union, and proved a very happy one.

Allerdale House and the estate attached to it became the property of Sir Allan Fairfax. He removed some of the improvements of Mr. Hankum, but did little or nothing himself to the building, or the grounds, except restore them both to the state in which they had been left by Mr. Graham. Margaret felt that it was a compliment to her father's memory, and was grateful for it, though not a word was said by either upon the subject. They both loved the

spot, and every year visited it in the early autumn wandering, with love undecayed, through scenes where love first began, and with every object around them recalling some happy hope of early years to lend new lustre to fruition.

It was there, in the month of September, and towards nine in the evening, that Fairfax and his fair wife, and an old brother officer, who had been major of his regiment, were seated after dinner, on the day that the latter had come down in somewhat bad health, to pass a week or two with his friend. They had dined at six, so that they had remained chatting together some time after the dessert was put upon the table, calling up old scenes, and going through past campaigns. Margaret sat and listened with interest and love and pride, for assuredly all she heard told to her beloved husband's advantage, and sometimes she would ask for further details of adventures barely referred to by the two officers; and then they would sit for several minutes silent, musing over the past, or enjoying the present, while to the mind of each the shadowy end of the dining-room would become peopled with the images of memory or fancy.

"Do you know, Fairfax," said the old major, at length, "that poor Harrington is dead?"

"No, indeed," replied Fairfax, "I had not heard of it. Where did he die?"

"In Paris," replied the other. "It was put in the papers that he died suddenly; but some people say he committed suicide."

"I hope not," said Sir Allan; "that would be, indeed, a sad termination to not a very satisfactory career. I met him once after he sold out of ours, and we passed an evening together at an inn. He was then in good spirits, because his purse was full; and you know, Leslie, it was only when his pocket was empty that he was melancholy. Nothing on earth seemed to touch him but that."

"Ah, poor fellow, I am sorry for him," answered

the old officer; "he was a wild, thoughtless dog, but a fine, honourable fellow."

Fairfax was silent, but at length he said, "He was generous and kind-hearted, but I think very weak, which often placed him in very unpleasant situations. He was uncommonly clever, too, in almost everything he undertook; but I do not know a more dangerous combination for a man's own self, or for others, than ability and weakness."

"I believe you are right," answered the major; "and certainly poor Harrington had both."

Here the conversation in regard to this individual ended; and shortly after, the party returned to the drawing-room; but even there they did not protract the night long; for Lady Fairfax was in a rather delicate situation, and about half-past nine she retired. She had not been long in her dressing-room when her husband joined her, and sitting down by her as she lay upon the sofa, he said——

"Leslie has gone to bed, for he is sadly shaken, poor man; and so now, Margaret, I have come up to tell you a story."

"Indeed!" she said. "Is it an oriental tale, or a romance of our own land?"

"A little of both, dear girl," he answered.

"You remarked, I dare say, our conversation about Captain Harrington?"

"Yes, I did, and was sorry for him, poor man," replied Margaret.

"Well, my love, upon his life hung the only secret I had from my Margaret," said Fairfax. "I gave my honour that I would not reveal it as long as he lived, not even with the reservation of the name; for one part of the transaction was so well known, that the other, if told, was sure to be fixed upon him. When I was a very young man, Margaret, I entered into a distinguished regiment of foot, my good uncle having purchased a commission for me, by very strenuous saving, for he was liberal, and a somewhat careless man by habit and disposition, and no income would

have been more than sufficient for him. I was in that regiment when I first knew you, and one of my early companions, as a fellow ensign, was this very Harrington. He had exchanged into a cavalry regiment some years before I came hither, but I, having no means of paying the difference, remained where I was. After the sharp dismissal I received from your mother, and the vanishing of all hope of hearing from you or your father, I became so gloomy, that my uncle inquired the cause, and I told him that I was most anxious to see active service, and to obtain some means of distinguishing myself. The only field open was India, and the kind old man found means to raise upon his books and pictures, which were to have formed a little fund for me after his death, the snm required for the purchase of a troop in the very same regiment into which Harrington had previously exchanged. I found him with the regiment when I ioined, and was delighted to do so, for he was a most agreeable man, and none of the bad points of his character had become apparent during our first short acquaintance. I found him very much changed, however. He was fond of gambling and the turf, had a good deal of the braggadocia about him, and though still showing great abilties, and a heart that was generous and noble by fits and starts, I did not feel that a man of such very loose principles was one of whom I could make my friend. I believe he was piqued by a certain degree of reserve which he remarked in my manner; but he took no notice, and we remained upon civil and kindly terms. One night he was boasting that such was his luck, as he called it, at cards, that he could feel sure of dealing himself a certain number of honours upon the average every time the cards were dealt for ten times. The thing struck me as ridiculous, and, excited by the conversation, I exclaimed, 'Nonsense, Harrington —I will bet you a hundred pounds you do not!' He instantly said, 'Done!' I could not retract, and the next night the trial took place in his rooms before a

number of brother officers. He won the bet, and I paid my hundred pounds, though it left me poor for the next twelve months. The matter was over, and I thought no more of it but as of a very foolish act on my own part, the punishment for which would cure me, for the rest of my life, of using a silly expression to prove my conviction. Harrington sold out of the regiment some time after, and returned to Europe, and I followed, upon leave, at the end of six or eight months. By this time my poor uncle was dead. I had nothing but a very small annuity and my pay. My funds were nearly exhausted when I arrived in England; and I had no means of purchasing the papers on which my fortunes, as it turned out, depended—purchasing, I may call it, for although the rascal asserted that he detained them as payment for a charge against my poor father, which the executors had refused to pay, that was all a pretence. However, hearing of your father's disasters, I came down to Cumberland at once. I wrote to you: you answered me, and I set out for London again like a madman, to hurry forward the sale of my commission. It was rendered unnecessary by the event I am going to tell you. At a small town in Huntingdonshire, the axle of the stage broke about nine o'clock in the evening, and I was forced to betake myself to an inn till the damage could be repaired. I found there in the passage my old fellow-soldier Harrington, who seemed, and I believe was, exceedingly glad to see me, invited me to his rooms, and entertained me as well as the place would permit. He saw, however, that I was in low spirits, and very anxious to proceed, and he put many questions in a more delicate manner than I could have expected, from what I had before known of his character. I answered him frankly, that I was hurrying to London to sell my commission, as I believed that my whole future prospects in life might depend upon the command of a small sum of money which I did not possess. He immediately offered me assistance; but that I at once declined;

for he was not one, Margaret, towards whom I would lay myself under any obligation. I told him I did not borrow money, and that reply seemed to throw him into a deeper fit of meditation than I ever saw fall upon him before. He asked, what did it matter accepting the loan of a few hundred pounds from an old friend, when they could be easily repaid at any time by the very step which I was rashly going to take at once without necessity. I told him that one hundred was all I required, but that even that I would not borrow.

"This plunged him in deeper meditation still, and then he sent for wine, and drank a good deal. I had often before remarked, that when affected by wine, a naturally frank and generous character appeared in him, which had been terribly obscured by the effects of vices and weaknesses, and as he warmed on the present occasion, he urged me more strongly to accept the money that I required. I still resisted, and told him my resolution was unalterable; and, at length, he became considerably agitated. He rose, paced up and down the room, and, at length, grasping my hand, he said, 'Take it, Fairfax, take it; and relieve my mind of a great load.' I replied, with something like a smile, that I did not see how it would relieve his mind to burden mine; but that such was my firm resolution, that I would not borrow money, if my whole fortune in life depended upon it. I cannot tell you all the steps which led to the conclusion. He had recourse again and again to the glass; he seemed to waver and hesitate; and, indeed, his conduct appeared so strange in pressing assistance upon a man unwilling to receive it, that I began to think his intellect was affected, when suddenly he became calm, sat down, and said, 'Now, Fairfax, you must take the money, and I will tell you why; but you must promise me, upon your word of honour, never to repeat what I am going to say as long as I am alive.' I readily promised; and he went on to say, 'I can bear my

feelings no longer, Fairfax, When first I played you a very sorry trick, I tried to pass it off upon myself as a good joke. I thought I could tell you at any time, and would tell you some day. But month after month passed by, and I did not tell you; and then I sold out, and we were separated, and I became ashamed to write to you; but still I resolved to tell you the whole facts, and make restitution as soon as ever I saw you. I should have done it already, but you seemed to give me an opportunity of following a middle course, and not risking your good opinion for ever, while I restored to you what is your own. Do you remember a bet between us, in regard to how many honours I would deal myself so many times running, and that I won a hundred pounds of you?' I replied, I did perfectly; and his rejoinder was, 'Well, then, Fairfax, I tell you that sum was not won fairly. You piqued me by contradicting my assertion regarding my uniform luck, before the whole mess, and I determined, right or wrong, that you should lose your bet. I marked the cards, Fairfax, by running a needle through the corner of every coloured card; I re-enclosed them carefully in their covers to escape all suspicion, and completely deceived you and every one present. I thus dealt myself what I pleased, and won your money most unjustly. Now you can have no scruple at receiving it again.' At first, my love, I would hardly believe him, and thought it was a generous sort of trick he sought to play me; but he assured me most solemnly, that he had stated the plain facts; and, as you may easily imagine, I had no further hesitation in taking that which was my own. He eagerly bound me to the promise I had made, however, never to repeat his confession to any one as long as he lived, and I repeated it with the full determination of keeping it inviolate. Nothing on earth would have induced me to relate this story before his death, and probably I should not do so now, but that I feel there should be no subject whatsoever on which

I and Margaret should not be able to speak. To you only, dear girl, shall the tale ever be told; for though I could not agree with Leslie in thinking poor Harrington 'a fine honourable fellow,' yet I think there was in him, as there is in a great part of the better classes in England, much that is very good, though the better qualities were, in his case, smothered by vices, follies, and affectations."

Such was the tale told by Fairfax to Margaret, and such the incident which, in a former chapter of this work, I longed to tell at the time, and promised to tell afterwards; but as he did not think fit to divulge the secret then, how could I?

THE END.

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